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STRATHALLAN.

BY

ALICIA LEFANU,

GRAND-DAUGHTER TO THE LATE THOMAS SHERIDAN, M.A.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

~~~~~  
Quando scende in nobil petto  
E compagno un dolce affetto  
Non rivale alla virtù:  
Respirate, alme felici  
E vi siano i Numi amici  
Quanto avverso il ciel vi fù.

METASTASIO.—DEMETRIO.

~~~~~

London:

PRINTED FOR SHERWOOD, NEELY, AND JONES,
PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1816.



R. and R. Gilbert, Printers, St. John's Square, London

P R E F A C E.

DESIROUS of holding a medium both in principle and language, between that severity which forbids the existence of passion, and consequently prevents the merit of overcoming it, and that enthusiasm, which, dazzled by its wild and fitful splendors, mistakes, or wilfully confounds, in every page, its destructive fires, with the awful and lovely lights of virtue, the author has found difficulties in the execution of her work, which may not, perhaps, be accepted as a sufficient apology for its many imperfections.

Conscious, however, that they are not the result of presumptuous negligence, she ventures, with trembling diffidence, though unfriended and unpatronized, to meet the eye of candid criticism: assured, while her first attempt is read, it will be remembered, that there is a difference between the errors of inexperience, and the sins of incorrigible stupidity: and that the bird, who begins by trilling its wild strain, uncertain, faint, and low, may, if those notes are encouraged and well-directed, burst forth, at some future time, in all the clear and varied cadence of full and grateful song.

STRATHALLAN.

CHAP. I.

Meglio è morir che trarre
Selvaggio vita in solitudin, dove
A niun sei caro, e di nessun ti cale.

ALFIERI.

“GOOD heavens,” cried the lovely Lady Torrendale, as her woman was putting the last finish to her dress for a dinner party in the country, “how long is this life to last? I have tried it but a fortnight, and I am already completely sick of it. If my Lord Torrendale finds it necessary to spend some time at his Derbyshire estate, why cannot he leave me at Bath, or at Rose-villa—One could pass an Autumn so pleasantly at Rose-villa—Or if he must insist on my accompanying him here, why not suffer me at

least to fill the house with decent people from the land of the living? If Strathallan were returned 'twould make some difference — But to carry me down to a desert with no other companions than my little, unformed girl, and her sickening, sentimental governess — Really my dear Floss," she continued, caressing a little silken haired spaniel that lay at her feet, "as I am now situated, you are, I think, the only rational creature I have seen this some time past."

"Very complimentary," exclaimed Lord Torrendale, who entered her dressing-room at the moment her attendant had quitted it, "Yet there are ways, Lady Torrendale, by which a few month's residence in the country might be rendered not only bearable, but productive of the most lasting and well-grounded satisfaction."

"What are they my Lord? I should be very glad to know them."

"Have you not your elegant domestic resources, the amusement of books, the cultivation of the society around you, and the pleasures of benevolence?"

" Benevolence! you know how many experiments I have tried in that way already. I came down to the country, glowing with the romantic hopes inspired by the fine description given in novels, of rural innocence and sensibility, and for the first days, Miss Langrish and I did nothing but work, and talk of them. We resolved to make petticoats and gowns sufficient for some pretty little children, who had attracted my notice on our first arrival, and who did not appear to me very well clothed. I anticipated a delicious surprise, on the part of the mother, by stealing to the cottage in her absence, and dressing the little things myself in their new array—But as soon as I took one upon my lap, it began to cry; its sister, a girl, a little older, began to beat it for being so noisy—in the midst of this 'horrid stir' comes the mother herself, all in a heat from her work, and in no very gentle temper towards the strangers, who had disturbed the 'sweet children.' She started, indeed, as if she had seen a ghost, when she found the disturber was my Ladyship's Ladyship, and dropping a

low curtsy, begged ten thousand pardons, and made ten millions of apologies. 'Children would be rude; they did not like strange faces; they did not, poor things,' she continued, soothing the little sobbing urchin on her breast: and, treated as little less than an invader, I found that I had created only confusion and disturbance, where I expected the most lively demonstrations of joy, and the most pathetic expressions of gratitude. Not discouraged with the failure of my first attempt, I resolved to inform myself of the real state of the peasantry, and entered unexpectedly another cottage—it belonged to an old woman. She was in the height of business, washing her house, and altogether so strange and dirty a figure, that if I had not been the most exemplary of women, I could not possibly have refrained from laughing. Instead of which, I made the most condescending enquiries respecting her prospects, her wants, and those of her family. But she would never answer me by any thing but awkward apologies for the appearance of her house, which, she assured me was, in general,

the neatest in the village, and the money I slipped into her hand seemed hardly to compensate the mortification of being, as she termed it, caught 'in such a pickle,' and her 'place' in 'such a mess'."

"These disappointments," Lady Torrendale, "have resulted from ill grounded expectations, and hasty conclusions; and rather prove the propriety of your remaining some time longer in the country, than the necessity of your quitting it. It is not by unexpectedly rushing into the cottages of the poor, that you will meet with either welcome or respect; previous good offices must justify the intrusion. When you are better acquainted with them, you will find that sentiment and impassioned gratitude are not their characteristics, particularly in England. Familiarize them to you first by a course of active and useful benevolence, and then, depend upon it, your appearance among them will be hailed, (not, perhaps, with transport) but sufficient testimonies of that solid regard, which generally arises from benefits received, and the expectation of farther advantage."

" I am surprised you can think," resumed her Ladyship, " that I have taken as yet but little trouble. Did I not put my name at the head of the list of Lady Patronesses for the School upon the new plan? But, I dont know how it is, it requires so much attention, and fuss, and exertion, and you must visit and inspect it yourself; and there is really so much to do at home, one cannot go early, that is, before breakfast time; after breakfast, one must walk : then after walking it is the hour for luncheon, and after luncheon you lie upon the sofa, and you have to dress for dinner, and, in short—"

" In short," interrupted Lord Torrendale, " Half an hour in the week is too much to be resolutely devoted to the purpose of benefiting your fellow creatures."

" Now you are severe. Then, as to cultivating the society around us, I *did* patronize the monthly Assembly, when first I came down. On a most disagreeable night, with ' my coachman in drink and the moon in a fog,' " I sacrificed myself without a murmur for the good of the community. I endeavour-

ed to lead the way to something of a better taste among the girls, and to make them uncover their backs and shoulders, so as to look a little decent; I even tried to introduce waltzing, for which I am sure I had all the young men on my side, but still, some stiff, upright sticks, persisted in preferring to be set opposite to one another, in the straight lines of a country dance, like cabbage stalks."

"While you thought such sticks would appear to so much more advantage, surrounded by the twining scarlet-runner; to return your gardening simile.

"Then," continued Lady Torrendale, taking no notice of this last observation, "as this country is unfortunately quite hilly enough, I brought forward our Brighton diversion of Donkey-riding, which, from sympathy, or some other reason was better received by the natives; 'till one of the little animals happening to disembarass himself of his heavy burthen, fat Mrs. Rumble-tumble, by setting her down, without any previous hint of his intentions, in a quag-mire, her husband has utterly discountenanced the amusement ever

since—I still, however, tried to fill up my time, and even in spite of nature and inclination, sometimes hunted with odious Lady Dare-all.”

“ Let me entreat you to recollect,” said Lord Torrendale, looking at his watch, “ that we are out-staying our appointment, and defer the rest of your philippic ’till our return.”

“ Now are you quite out of patience, and in a few moments more, you would be ready to ask yourself Lord Townley’s wise question ‘ Why did I marry?’ ”

“ No madam,” answered his Lordship, with something of a bitter smile, “ I too well remember the only cause.”

“ Of that effect, pray let me finish the quotation for you ‘ my beauty’ was it not? My goodness too, I hope, had some share—it really has been of late pretty severely tried. What do you think of having invited a pleasant party to spend a few of the dull weeks at one of the most delightful villas in the world, and being suddenly told the marriage waits, and that one has but two

hours to prepare to leave them all, and to set off for the Peak of Derbyshire?"

"You know I could not keep Rose-villa, I have sold it to Lord Lyndhurst."

"Yes, but I know that Lord Lyndhurst was not to have entered into possession 'till the beginning of spring, when I should have completely done with it; for I never wish to see the same place twice—and to leave so charming a party, and in so sudden and strange a manner—"

"Lady Torrendale, I will be very frank with you; it was to break up that very party, that I availed myself of an unexpected circumstance, that made my presence necessary in Derbyshire, to insist upon your accompanying me there.—It was to take you from the attractions of play, from those Leysters, those Pleydels, the worthy successors of your favorite Lady Julia Melbourne—that—"

"O now I see the cause of all this confusion, 'tis the ghost of the knave of clubs that arose in all his terrors. Well, as he certainly is a very formidable gentleman, perhaps it will give you pleasure to hear, that

notwithstanding your suspicions, I never had the slightest flirtation with him : or, to speak seriously, that I never, in my life, risked the chances of a game of hazard ; or even, at a game of skill, ventured more than the most rigid prudence might sanction."

" Ah, Laura, could I believe you were in earnest," said Lord Torrendale, with a look in which confidence struggled with doubt, " then would my mind feel indeed relieved."

" Then, if that is all that is wanting to relieve your mind, be happy," returned the Lady half laughing, " for here, in the most solemn manner I assure ' your gravity', on the word of a Countess, I never did, nor never will."

" Then those money difficulties must have been of much less consequence than you represented them to me, and I need not have sold Rose-villa."

" Oh yes you must have sold Rose-villa."

" Laura you trifle with me," resumed his Lordship gravely—" If you have indeed escaped the dangerous fascinations of play, what source of expence?"

"Would you give any thing to know?"

"I confess, after the sacrifice I have made, I think I deserve your confidence."

"And if I tell you, will you let me invite some civilized persons from town?"

"Yes."

"Lady Leyster and Miss Mountain?"

"Yes."

"And modernize the house?"

"Yes."

"And turn it out of the windows?"

"Yes, any thing—every thing."

"Why then set your heart at rest; for never, no never will I tell you how that money was spent."

Seizing his arm, she ran down to the carriage with him, as she uttered these last words; and, as she gracefully stepped into it, Lord Torrendale, contemplating with habitual admiration, her still lovely figure, seemed, for a moment, to lose the impression of the recent scene, in distant, but more agreeable recollections.

CHAP. II.

For sanctity of place or time, were vain
 'Gainst that blind archer's soul-consuming power,
 Which scorns and soars all-circumstance above.

LORD STRANGFORD'S CAMOENS.

LORD Torrendale had entered life with good principles and respectable abilities, unaccompanied by those keen sensibilities and perceptions, which, according as they are directed, lead their possessor to glory and happiness, or to misery and disgrace: Having been commissioned by his father, to fall in love with a young lady, whose estate was near his own of Strathallan, in Scotland, he had complied with the injunction, so far as making formal proposals, which were as formally accepted; and he found himself the unconscious possessor of a treasure, in the person

of a lady, whose mind was of that superior temper, which he could not appreciate, and whose form, though lovely, was not the "kind of loveliness calculated to touch his heart."

Some unforeseen losses, and a dispute concerning a considerable part of her property, which altogether made her possessions fall much short of what was supposed to be its original value, were the causes to which, some grave enquirers ascribed the increasing indifference of her lord. But, though not splendidly liberal, he was far from a mercenary character. Be that as it may, the lovely Rosa of Strathallan (for that was then her title) fell a victim to that general neglect, of which she hardly knew how to complain, though she suffered so exquisitely from its effects. Knowing that her malady was seated in the mind, she declined to avail herself of the vain privilege of rank and wealth, of rambling in search of that health, which happiness alone could restore; and breathed her last at the northern seat, of which her husband left her such undisturbed possession; leaving her resemblance in a lovely boy, then four years old, for whose

sake his Lordship determined to keep free from any other engagement.

Having little that was prepossessing in his appearance, and being naturally of a disposition cold, timid, and reserved, the Viscount (now Earl of Torrendale) was suffered to keep his resolution, without being much molested by the snares of high-born beauty. Yet was the year, devoted to ostentatious grief, scarcely expired, when, upon an accidental visit to Bath, he found himself assailed by a species of fascination, against which, being totally unprepared, he was the less able to guard his heart.

On the occasion of a sermon being preached by one of the most popular divines of that city, for the benefit of some charitable institution, it was proposed among the visitants from Ireland (who always form a considerable part of its company) that the practice, which had been followed up in their own country, with such universal success, should be adopted, instead of the usual mode of making collections : and that, among the ladies who constituted the ornament of the scene,

a certain number, conducted by gentlemen of rank, should present themselves as the receivers of the contributions. It was at a crowded and fashionable chapel, where this new plan had been embraced, that Lord Torrendale found himself among the numerous and delighted auditory. The preacher was eloquent, even to draw tears. But his Lordship, who, hating any thing that bore the appearance of an appeal to the feelings, stigmatized the most decent and temperate use of the powers of countenance and gesture, with the appellation of grimace and stage effect, and entertained a laudable prejudice against the use of pathos, sentiment, imagery, in short, of any of Heaven's gifts, to Heaven's immediate glory, slumbered very quietly through the sermon; and when the cessation of the voice awoke him, determined fully, in his own mind, not to give more than absolute necessity required; when the plate was presented to him, not by a meagre, bowing, snuffling clerk, in his best Sunday garb, not by a good substantial church-warden, in his new coat and wig; but by a lovely young

female, glowing in the first bloom of beauty, and drest in all the bewitching elegance of fashion. Her dazzling eyes were turned on him with an expression of earnest, yet modest supplication. The dimpled smile upon her lips, seemed that of the angel of charity. Her form, the waving curls of her light brown hair, her hand, the most beautiful in the world, were all in unison to complete the charms of her appearance. Lord Torrendale deposited five times the sum he had originally intended, and added his heart to the gift. As he returned home, he discovered that the presence of a mother would add greatly to the comforts of his little boy, the young Lord Strathallan, for whose happiness he suddenly became more than usually solicitous.

Laura Granville, the inspirer of this new passion, was the reigning beauty of Bath. She had been less favoured by fortune than by nature; and her birth, though respectable, was not such as to entitle her to hope for so splendid an establishment.

The idea, that his prudence might be called in question, by an engagement for

which, passion could be alone alledged as the cause, was terrible to Lord Torrendale. So terrible, that, by an effort of desperate resolution, he tore himself from the scene of attraction; and as he rolled along from the dangerous spot, and its white squares and crescents gradually assumed the appearance of a little model in card of the most elegant city in the world, congratulated himself, every mile he passed, upon his fortunate escape. But the charms of the conquering Laura had made a deeper impression than he imagined. He went to court, to the theatres, to the parks, still it was the same scene of insipidity; still he missed something which alone could make life delightful. Her graceful form, her pleading look at the moment she presented the plate, were ever before him; while the sophisticated attractions of fashionable beauty made him still more regret the perfection of the blooming and natural charms he had left behind. In short, finding himself unhappy, while absent from Miss Granville, or rather, in love's official phrase, "that he

could not live without her," his Lordship once more ordered his horses, but with a much lighter heart than when he had prepared for his former journey; and, arriving at Bath, enquired for Miss Granville, found she was still there; and, oh, wonderful! still disengaged; wooed her with the ardour of the most impassioned attachment, to which perhaps the secret vanity of carrying off the most beautiful girl at Bath, and introducing her at the ensuing drawing-room as his bride, contributed its unacknowledged, but due proportion; and partly with the eagerness which an infant feels to get some beautiful toy "in its own hand," the sort of pleasure which the full-grown child experiences upon exhibiting a rare and splendid trinket; sought and obtained the consent of his fair lady, or, as the newspapers have it, permission to lead her to the hymeneal altar.

Now, to prevent its being supposed out of nature, that a man of a disposition cold and unenthusiastic, as Lord Torrendale's; one who was alike insensible to the charms of

eloquence, or the arts, should suffer himself to be thus suddenly and irrevocably captivated by the attraction of feminine graces, it is only necessary to ask one question, and to request it may be answered sincerely: is the gentleman to be found, however distinguished either by years, gravity, or wisdom, who does not, in a degree, acknowledge the influence of beauty, particularly when presented to his imagination in a manner unexpected and advantageous? Not content with confining her triumphs to the young and susceptible, it is her boast to subdue the heart, however guarded by the frost of pride, experience, or indifference. She knows a thousand avenues, by which to address the most inaccessible breast, and in this sense may be truly said alone to possess what has been so long sought for as the grand desideratum, the "universal language."

Like many a plain, but well-meaning lady, who, seduced by the persuasions of an eloquent millener, hastily consents to buy some tempting article of finery, which she finds, too late, totally mismatches with her figure

or time of life; Lord Torrendale quickly discovered he could not have made a more useless purchase than the beautiful Laura Granville. The disparity in their years, though he was past thirty, and his blooming consort had numbered but sixteen, was only such as the world admits to be the proper difference; but the diversity in their dispositions rendered them utterly unsuited to each other. Though not of an amiable character, *he* had proper ideas upon all the duties of his rank and station. Given up to amusement and flattery, *she* exhibited an utter contempt for those of her's. He was naturally silent, fond of the pleasures of domestic intercourse, and of retirement. She, was never happy but in a crowd. The first deed of her reign, was to pass a general act of oblivion upon all her Bath friends, those who had been either the guides or companions of her youth; the second, was to send the young Strathallan, as soon as he had attained an age at which it was possible for him to be admitted, to a public seminary, on the pretence that it was the most advantageous mode that could be adopted for his education.

Poor Strathallan! for whose sake Lord Torrendale tried to flatter himself; that he had ventured again upon the cares of domestic life!

Being thus relieved from every incumbrance, she gave the reins to her prevailing inclinations; and even the birth of two children, a son and daughter, at a considerable interval from each other, did not seem to diminish her taste for pleasure and dissipation.

It was now above twenty years since Lord Torrendale had made this imprudent choice; and his disappointment preying upon his spirits, increased the natural harshness and reserve of his character. Time had a different effect upon his lively Countess: while it impaired the graces of her form, it only augmented her opinion of the power of those of her mind; though her understanding had always been as much below, as her person was above, mediocrity. But she had in her favour, spirits, rank, prosperity, and boundless confidence. In conversation, she ventured every thing; and it would have been sur-

prising indeed, if success had not sometimes attended the venture.

During the first years of their marriage, she had induced her husband to give up, for her sake, his favourite plan of residing, some part of the year, upon his Derbyshire estate; but when her influence began to decline, this idea, which he had relinquished with discontent and self-reproach, was resumed by him with all the ardour which the attractions of duty and inclination united, could inspire. At first, he suffered her to spend the time he passed in Derbyshire, at a distance from him, and in what manner she thought proper. But latterly, her expences exceeding what he considered it possible even the demands of her rank and situation could require, and forcing him to submit to serious inconveniences to supply them, he began to fear, that during his absence, she might have been drawn, by the allurements of play, into some dangerous imprudence.

It has been seen, at the beginning of this Chapter, that his Lordship was capable of taking a sudden resolution. He accordingly

announced to her, in the unexpected manner before described, the absolute necessity of his departure for Derbyshire, and of her leaving her fashionable friends, to accompany him. When convinced, by the explanation he had with her, that his fears upon one subject were ill founded, he was still far from satisfied with her conduct. Where no error was, where was the necessity of mystery? On the whole, he felt happy to have her once more restored to the tranquillity of domestic society, some time before her gay friends would come down from London, to visit their country seats. With very different feelings, Lady Torrendale found herself the unwilling inhabitant of a beautiful mansion, a hundred and fifty miles from London, with none but her husband or her daughter, to look to for society or support.

CHAP. III.

Deh! mira egli cantò, spuntar la rosa
 Dal verde suo modesta e verginella;
 Che mezzo aperta ancora, e mezzo ascosa
 Quanto si mostra men, tanto è più bella.

TASSO, GERUSALEMME LIBERATA.

THE day after the conversation we have already related, Lady Torrendale informed her husband, that she had discovered a treasure.

His Lordship, delighted at any thing that could relieve *her*, and consequently *himself*, from the languor of discontent, kindly demanded what it was?

“ You have heard of the Melbournes of ‘ The Rocks ? ’—I was determined to know them; first, because they were hundred and twentieth cousins to poor dear Lady Julia

Melbourne, who, but that is no recommendation to you ;—secondly, because they were the only family of any consequence in the county who did not make advances to our acquaintance.”

“ Or for any other good female reason?” interrupted his Lordship, with a sufficiently apt quotation.

“ But how to accomplish it was the difficulty.”—

“ That indeed did not seem easy.”

“ No, for *he* is reckoned the strangest old dragon; and from his singular pursuits and hatred of society, has obtained the name of the Hermit of the Rocks.—You will laugh to hear that I have invaded those peaceful rocks. This is the way I managed it. As they are but a four miles drive from Woodlands, and through a delightful country, I proposed to Miss Langrish to make that our airing, as a variety from our usual drives. When we got near The Rocks, my intention was, to break down.”

“ To break down!—Lady Torrendale, I am surprised that”——

“ Yes, my Lord, I knew you would be surprised ; but how else draw the Recluse from his cell ? ”

“ And do you think, Madam, such a plan very consistent with the dignity of your character ? ”

“ Oh very dignified ;—Let me go on. Leaving to our right a little straggling village that bears the same name as Mr. Melbourne’s seat, we proceeded along the road ’till it began to grow irregular and rocky ; we were suddenly startled by the coachman’s crying out — ‘ There, my Lady, there be Squire Melbourne’s house,—down yonder in that hollow.’ The descent was truly terrific ; it was through two meeting rocks that almost closed above our heads. But, as there appeared to me just room enough for a carriage, I resolved not to give up the adventure ; and spite of Miss Langrish’s entreaties, and affected screams, through the tremendous defile we drove. I anticipated the moment when we should emerge from this narrow passage, and was very tranquilly preparing myself for the expected overthrow, when Miss Langrish exclaimed, we could positively go

no farther, for that the way was choaked up. Some pieces of the rock, already loosened by time, I suppose, had not been able to resist the violent storm of last night, (we never have such terrible storms in London,) and they now lay strewed in the pathway, so as to make it indeed impossible to get on. As I did not feel quite the dignity and *sang froid* of the great Duchess of Northumberland, to sit quietly in my carriage, and order them 'to be removed,' I was thinking of turning back, quite mortified with the failure of my scheme, when it occurred to me, that as we had gone so far, we might break down as we originally proposed, and then send one of the men round to find, if possible, a more practicable entry into the enchanted castle;—he was to mention the accident that had happened in this drive, which I took for amusement, without knowing it brought me near Mr. Melbourne's domain.' This message, which passed from the coachman to the footman, and from the footman to the awkward country boy, who for the moment supplies the place of poor

Williams, was conveyed ; but not exactly in the manner I intended : for a few moments afterwards, the animal came back grinning, and saying, that he had found out a circuitous path, or as he phrased it, ‘ a round-about way to the house, where he had met some of Squire Melbourne’s folks, and told them “ as how his Lady sent her service towards Mr. and Mrs. Melbourne, and she had driven in the coach from Woodlands, and had the linch-pin taken out on very purpose, when she came near their house, that they might ask her in.’ This you will allow was a *contre-temps*. I did not suffer it however to disconcert me ; I come into the country to *give* laws, and teach life and manners to the recluses, not to suffer myself to be discomposed by *them*. The arrival of two men from Mr. Melbourne’s to enquire into and repair the damage we had sustained, interrupted these reflections. They brought Mr. and Mrs. Melbourne’s compliments and entreaties, that I would alight and walk into the house. My Ladyship suffered herself to be intreated ; and, leaning on Miss Langrish’s arm, I let them point out to me a

path, at a little distance, which led through meeting trees, directly into the grounds, much wondering at my own stupidity, which had prevented me from discovering it sooner. I arrived at the bottom of a grassy lawn, and was looking around for some one, before I exclaimed, 'Where have you brought me? I fear I am an intruder!' when we perceived the loveliest little sylph coming down to us from the house, and inviting us by her smiles and blushes, (even before her voice could be heard), to approach. Her hair, of a golden auburn, waved upon her neck; her colour, heightened by modesty and exercise, had that soft, yet beautiful glow, which it is impossible, by words, to describe; her address had something singularly fascinating; it was free; yet it was like the freedom and innocence of a child, or of a little sportive animal that confides its life and safety fearlessly into your care; it was united to the most scrupulous propriety, and a dignity and retiring delicacy of manner, the most interesting. She seemed overjoyed at the sight of strangers, and fearful that we should

withdraw again. She said, her mother was hastening to meet us, and her father she would seek immediately. We understood, by these expressions, that the person who spoke to us, was Miss Melbourne, the only daughter of the family, whose privacy I had so presumptuously invaded. Her father was soon found. He was employed setting his watch by the sun-dial, and his grotesque appearance, contrasted admirably with the simple elegance of Matilda. He wore a furred cap and night-gown, and was exactly what I can figure to myself, one of the French philosophers, the *Hommes des Champs* to have been. His address was, however, polite and gentleman-like, though a little singular, and I am sure he has once been a man of the world; he enquired anxiously about my '*accident*;' and when I condescended to acknowledge that I believed I had been more frightened than hurt, he pressed me to rest and take refreshment.—“If Lady Torrendale,” said he, “will honor my *cottage* with a visit.” I was surprised at the expression; but the house, at the first glance, really answers the description. The grounds about

it are noble ; not that there is much of what we call pleasure-garden, for Mr. Melbourne, with all his perfections, is no florist I believe. But all that nature can supply in rocks, in wood, and water, is here in grand profusion : and the whole of this sylvan residence is so fortified and surrounded by barriers impassable, but by one particular path ; that it has the air of a delightful solitude, selected for the abode of domestic peace and—Oh ! Lud ! I am going to be sentimental ! What I was observing before was, that the house does not, in any respect, answer to the grounds, being low, and thatched in part, and only rendered considerable by the extent of its wings and offices ; but when I had got within—
—Oh, my Lord ! prepare yourself for Aladdin's palace—trees of gold ! fruit of jewels ! I never met with a more agreeable disappointment in my life ! The room in which I was received, half grotto, half palace, combined the beauties of both, and yet was, in fact, only an elegant and ingenious way of disposing of a collection of natural curiosities. It was rather small, the roof arched,

which was favourable to the manner in which it was decorated ; and the Gothic windows, of stained glass of every different colour, gave it, on the first entrance, an agreeable coolness and gloom, which set off the brilliancy of the various lights produced by the reflection of mirrors, and the refraction of crystals,—(now don't laugh if I do not express myself quite scientifically,) which struck the eye on looking around. Disposed upon slabs of different kinds of marbles, were specimens of every curious sort of ore, spar, or petrification, that I believe ever was found in this or any other place. These were alternately diversified by tablets on which were arranged the most rare and beautiful shells, branches of red and white coral, and other marine productions. Mirrors, placed judiciously behind these collections, and which reached from the ceiling to the floor, doubled their effect. The pannels between these mirrors were adorned with stuffed birds ; not stupidly arranged in glass cases, as you have seen them at museums, but perched on branches proceeding from

the wall, and made in such a natural imitation of different trees, that nothing but motion was wanting to persuade you their inhabitants were alive and happy in their native groves. There were—let me see now—for a list of the company, a greater variety of beautiful Indian paroquets, parrots, macaws, than Lady Oriole ever had in her possession. The beautiful halcyon birds of paradise, every bird of gayest plumage, from the size of the peacock spreading his glorious fan, to the little humming birds that shone in groups, forming constellations of rubies, emeralds, and topazes, were here to be found in all the smoothness, the freshness, the vividness of life. Mr. Melbourne must certainly have some secret for preserving them, for never did I see any thing so perfect. We had seats enough, though in no very common taste. Ottomans, sophas, chairs, covered with the skins of the leopard, panther, tyger, zebra, formed a set of furniture not only rich and shewy, but, I should imagine, unique; and to complete the whole, (now I am sure I shall almost make even

you laugh), instead of lustres or candelabras, little stuffed monkeys of different species were dispersed about the room, holding golden branches. When looking at the birds and beasts, I thought myself at Parkinson's again. When I turned my eyes on the various ores, the various coloured crystals, the stalactites, and natricles, as Mr. Melbourne taught me to call them, which glittered round the walls, or depended from the roof; (for even the roof was fretted and adorned with those sort of ornaments), I could fancy myself in the caverns of Staffa, or the grotto of Antiparos. From the divinity of the grotto, Mrs. Melbourne, I met a reception at once the most graceful and cordial. She is an elegant creature, quite in the bloom of life, not older than I am, I should think; and, though so long buried in that solitude, quite with the *ton du monde* in every thing she says and does. How she came to marry such a queer old philosopher, it goes beyond my penetration to conceive; but she is not the only woman that is mismatched." A heavy sigh.

A truce with moral reflection, Lady Tor-

rendale, what farther did you see at Mr. Melbourne's.

“ During a delightful repast served up in China, adorned with the most beautiful botanic patterns, which I was *ignoramus* enough to admire, without being able to name or understand, we talked upon a thousand subjects, and spent two hours so pleasantly, we hardly thought it was two minutes. I apologised for my UNINTENTIONAL intrusion, and introduced myself as a friend to the late Lady Julia Melbourne, and well acquainted with the whole of that branch of the family. I immediately perceived, by a momentary silence, and a certain timid glance my little favorite Matilda threw at her mother, that was (for some reason), a forbidden subject. This was rather unfortunate; but, no way abashed, I turned the discourse upon music, and observing Mrs. Melbourne's harp, (which is a very fine one, with a glass frame, shewing the mechanism) I asked her if she did not cultivate that charming talent; and found by her answers she was a very superior musician; she is, indeed, highly accomplished

in every respect. I think I now remember all her connexions were remarkable for it. You must have heard of her—she was a Miss Villiers—”

“ Never in my life.”

“ Now I am sure you only say that to contradict me. Well—after I had paid my compliments to the lady, I thought it time to make the old gentleman talk a little philosophy. So I set him upon botany, and chemistry, and natural history, ’till he was quite entertaining. He taught me more of it in one conversation, than I ever knew before in my life, and gave me quite a clear idea of experimental philosophy.”

An incredulous smile from his Lordship was the only reply he made.

“ Here,” the Countess resumed, “ my little Matilda shone too—I could positively spend whole days with Mr. Melbourne and his daughter, looking at their experiments, and hearing them discourse about them.”

“ With the addition of a morning concert, an evening promenade, and half a dozen beaux to flirt with during the intervals.”

“ You may laugh ; but I declare I found Mr. Melbourne’s conversation very amusing, as well as instructive. He has given me quite a taste for science, and I have gained such a general idea of Conchology—Ornithology—Mineralogy—O how I admired the beautiful specimens of every kind that he has amassed together ! But still it was on the productions of his native country that he was most eloquent. Did you know that Derbyshire produces marbles and alabasters, as well as the most beautiful spars, topazine, amethystine of the most curious varieties and colours ? I am really delighted with the riches of the country : ’Tis natural it should be the nursery of philosophers—Then if you had heard the number of other minerals he named to me. Toad-stone and swine-stone ; amazon-stone, and blood-stone ; eagle-stone, soap-stone, chert ; quartz. Then as for shells, univalves, bivalves, multivalves”—

Perceiving that her lord, at this most dreadful and portentous display of learning in his wife, seemed disposed to stop his ears,

to prevent any further communications, the lady checked herself, in order to proceed with her narrative in a less alarming strain.

“ After he had talked sufficiently of Derbyshire petrifications, and crystallizations, and strata, and all that, Mr. Melbourne took me to his observatory; for he is a great astronomer, and has an orrery, the finest I ever saw—and thence to his laboratory—and thence”—

“ To his oratory, no doubt, interrupted Lord Torrendale.”

“ His oratory—no—what is that?”

“ A place I believe you seldom visit.”

“ Well you are the last man I should ever have expected to hear speak in praise of oratory—Oh, now I know what you mean, but I am determined not to be affronted. No—then he shewed me his camera obscura—the room as large as the one at Bath, and the picture it exhibited of the surrounding scenery, the trees, rocks, and waterfalls, truly delightful. We could see from it a tame Llama and Alpacha, with their young ones feeding upon the lawn (for nothing at the rocks is in the common way.) I also observed

several sheep and lambs with foreign looking faces. Dear Matilda told me the whole principle of the camera obscura. It merely consists in contriving to have the light thrown on the surface of the—superficies of the—somehow with a spring—I could tell it you exactly, if I could but remember it. We next visited the aviary, and then the apiary, where we saw the bees work under glasses; and she told me such wonderful stories of the sagacity of the bees, and of the houses built by the wasps, houses with stories, and pillars my Lord—and as for the bees, she put a book into my hand, which I laid down again, written by Huber I believe; and another about ants, which says they have jealousies, and animosities, and feelings, and affections, and passions, just like us; and that they not only lay up stores as we were always told, but that they plant, and work, and make war, and peace, and—

“ Oh spare me, spare me lady Torrendale, and tell me what is to be the end of these building wasps, and fighting ants?”

“ The end is, that I have taken a pro-

digious fancy to the whole family—to Matilda in particular—she is the most sweet-tempered—clever—accomplished—dear little soul.”

“Is she pretty?” asked Lord Torrendale yawning.

“I think I told you so before—if you had thought it worth while to attend to me.”

Yes, but my dear Laura—you know, a lady’s beauty—‘is seldom one who has the good fortune to be an equal favourite with the gentlemen’—“Well, so I grant you in general; but you ought to know me above such prejudice. Take my word for it Matilda has *real beauty*.”

Lady Torrendale always laid a marked emphasis on this expression; by which she often indirectly designated her own more decided pretensions in opposition to the claims of the croud of barely pretty women.

“I am glad of it,” resumed his lordship, “I thought you had said something about her being clever.”

“Clever! no—I only meant she had a facility of expression, and a knack of explaining any circumstance connected with

facts in science, which she learnt—as a matter of course you know—as one learns—but trust me, Matilda Melbourne is not one of our *wise ladies*. She has not the slightest grain of pride or pedantry; but on the contrary a desire to oblige in all she says and does; and an uncommonly happy manner of rendering the dryest and most difficult subjects clear, by an elegance, a choice of words—a certain peculiarly distinct, deliberate manner of utterance, which has a singular charm with her sweet, rounded voice—and then she pauses and fixes those soft eyes on you to see if she is perfectly understood, with a gentle earnestness—a look of interest.”

“Here,” continued Lady Torrendale taking from a port-folio a coloured drawing of Hebe, in the attitude of pouring out nectar, “as she helped to do the honors of our ‘sparkling feast’, she reminded me very much of that figure—the same oval face, turn of head, and clustering hair; but her eyebrows are black and Grecian, and her eyes, which are blue, have something more of languor in them, a something persuasive—in short

like what mine were when you used to think me handsome."

" I never thought you handsome."

" Oh yes you did, and you used to be ready to comply with every whim of mine."

" Never, that I recollect."

" Then I must remind you of it—and my present whim is that you should like old Mr. Melbourne very much; and admire his wife, who has promised to visit me with her charming daughter, and very soon—So if you will visit, and invite them, and have them very often at the house, I give you my word of honour, not to torment you any more the whole time we stay in Derbyshire." This overture was too unexpected and important to be treated with neglect; and Lord Torrendale, on the express condition that the Countess should fulfil her engagement, readily consented to cultivate the acquaintance of the Melbourne family.

CHAP. IV.

But this is worshipful society.

SHAKESPEARE.

THE captivating manners and unassuming beauty of Matilda Melbourne, had so far won upon the affections of the volatile Countess, as to make her lay aside her usual aversion to female merit, in the correct and animated description she gave of her attractions; but her Ladyship, when she had, as she supposed, overcome every difficulty, by prevailing on Lord Torrendale to seek the acquaintance of her family, did not advert to a still greater obstacle to any farther intimacy, in the reserve and reluctance of the recluse of the Rocks. While the preceding lively debate had passed between her and her Lord, a family council, no less divided, had been

held at Mr. Melbourne's; which to understand, it may be necessary to explain something of that gentleman's situation and history.

Passionately devoted to study, from his earliest youth, Mr. Melbourne's life had been past in seclusion. He had received a liberal education, of which he could never be persuaded to avail himself, in the choice of any profession : and the patrimony of a younger brother was expended by him, in the purchase of a little estate, or rather farm, where, surrounded by the favourite objects of his pursuit, and divided between his books and rural cares, he found every day new reason to exclaim, with the conscious exultation of the contemplative bard :

“ How many *his* employments, whom the world
Calls idle !”

Ten years had glided placidly away since first Mr. Melbourne had declared, at the age of twenty, his determination to adopt a retired and rural life ; when a law-suit, which required the presence of the whole family in town, drew Mr. Melbourne from his beloved

retreat. He took up his residence at the house of his brother, who was married, and settled in London ; and who, from the difference in their pursuits, had been, till now, almost a stranger to him. Here he met, for the first time, his cousin, Sir Reginald Melbourne, of Moss-cliff Abbey, the son of his father's elder brother.

The estate of the Rocks, which was at that time in Mr. Melbourne's family, came by a grandmother ; and thus rendered the younger branch of the family as opulent as the elder. Here he was also introduced to the lady, who was destined, at a future period, to be the charmer and enlivener of his solitude.

Aspasia Villiers, was the only daughter of a gentleman who possessed a high situation under government ; and was forced, by the death of her mother, at an early age to do the honours of a house, the centre of all that was distinguished in the world of taste, of rank, or literature. Admired for her beauty, but still more for her wit ; highly accomplished, at a period when accomplishments were not so generally cultivated, her conver-

sation had been the solace of ministers, her talents had delighted princes, at an age when few girls begin to emerge into notice. Still however, Aspasia was the lovely and accomplished, but portionless child of a man, whose income, dying with him, left him no resource to provide for her future establishment. Her high pretensions, and the splendid sphere in which she constantly moved, made her generally looked upon as a mark too elevated for modest merit to hope to reach ; yet not sufficiently distinguished by the favours of fortune, to be an object of competition among the great and powerful.

Sir Reginald, however, and his cousin, Mr. Melbourne, were struck by her charms almost in the same moment. The latter, prudently determined not to expose himself voluntarily to the fascinations of a woman, who, whatever might be her merit, lived in a style of gaiety and dissipation, which made it impossible for him to suppose she could consent to renounce the world, in order to share a retirement, which his circumstances and his taste induced him equally to embrace.

Sir Reginald, on his part, proud and secure, did not allow himself a moment to doubt his success.

The heart of Aspasia, mean time, had made its election, and it was in favour of Mr. Melbourne. "Wisdom and worth were all he had;" but these were not lost upon a mind so discerning. A certain diffidence of manner, which was found to conceal superior talents and information, a striking figure, and an interesting and manly countenance; these were the characteristics which she had distinguished in the unpretending recluse, and distinguished with fond partiality. Where the sympathy that attracted was mutual, the resolution to fly the danger, could not be of long duration. Frequent meetings increased the prepossession, and an accidental circumstance finally unveiled their minds to each other.

At a private play, to which all the Melbournes had been invited, Miss Villiers, after charming the spectators in the part of Cleopatra, no less by her talent than by the alluring beauty of her countenance, and the ma-

jestic graces of her person, evinced equal, though different excellence in the entertainment, where she represented the innocent and interesting Rosina. Mr. Melbourne happened to be placed next to her at supper; she still wore the dress in which she had so captivated his heart. To see her in this rural habit, was soothing to his fancy; never, he thought, had she smiled so sweetly on him: it seemed to bring her nearer to his wishes; and, inspired with an unusual degree of courage, he complimented her upon the versatility that could so well sustain a character, so different from that, which birth and education had made her own. She replied, that the part she had that evening supported, however ill it accorded with her present situation, was most congenial to her taste; and that she found the dress of the simple village maid, more in character with her feelings, than when, adorned as an empress, she had worn the splendid trappings of a court. Was it love that inspired this wonderful magnanimity of sentiment, at the moment the beautiful Aspasia believed, in its fullest extent,

the truth of what she said. Mr. Melbourne felt convinced she did ; and a delightful and confidential conversation ensued, in which he discovered, with equal surprise and pleasure, that she possessed a heart which beat in unison with his own, and a mind formed to relish all the simple and domestic pleasures:

Nothing now remained to check the hopes of Mr. Melbourne, but the preference Mr. Villiers openly gave to Sir Reginald. A sudden and violent illness, however, shortly after deprived Aspasia of her only remaining parent ; and, for some time, plunged her into a state of dejection, which refused to hear either the voice of consolation, or of love. When she at length consented to let Mr. Melbourne renew his suit, he, without difficulty, prevailed on her to quit a world, that, to her mind, already softened by affliction, no longer offered the same enjoyment ; and to retire with him to that beautiful spot, to which he had added every circumstance of rural comfort and convenience, and which her taste and judgment soon rendered a *ferme ornée*. Here, in the society of a wife

so lovely and beloved, and the additional happiness which the birth of a daughter, after some years of anxious expectation, conferred on him, Mr. Melbourne felt less than ever the want of any other intercourse. At his leisure hours, he cultivated an intimate acquaintance with the families of ferns, heaths, mosses, and grasses ; but forgot, at the same time, equally to cultivate the living families the neighbourhood afforded.

In this love of solitude, he was unintentionally seconded by his Aspasia, who, though she had given up the first society for him she loved, could never afterwards find attractions in any other. Sometimes, when gazing on the infant beauties of her daughter, a vague wish would cross her mind, that they could at once expand to womanhood : that the sensibility of that heart could already respond to her's ; the intelligence of those eyes express themselves in the intercourse of mind to mind. But soon remembering how short is the portion allotted to life, and how much the happiest were those years claimed by childhood and youth, she blushed at the selfish thought.

"Am I not a mother!" she exclaimed; "Oh I am surely, even now, sufficiently happy!"

But, as years advanced, and she saw her own perfections revive in the young Matilda's excellence, in every elegant and feminine accomplishment, she found, in storing her opening mind with useful and ornamental knowledge, ample and interesting employment; at the same time Mr. Melbourne took care to remedy in his daughter the defect he had often secretly deplored in his wife. For, though her acquirements in history, in languages, in general literature, far surpassed what is usually attained by a female, she was not a woman of science; and sometimes, with harmless playfulness, rather laughed at her husband's endless and grave dissertations upon blades of grass, and butterflies' wings, or the still more learned discourses upon hydrogen and oxygen, which were delivered by his friend, Mr. Sowerby, the only visitor who ever disturbed his solitude.

On these occasions, his only resource was to retire with his daughter Matilda, to his laboratory or his study: and, while amid his

books and philosophical apparatus, he beheld her lightly flitting around him, with the obedience, and almost the intelligence, of a little attendant spirit, ministering to the operations of the parent sage, or gazing with mute wonder to see him

———“ Mark with magic art profound,
The speed of light, the circling march of sound.”

imprison the boundless air, or ascertain the movements of the unnumbered host of heaven; he felt almost indifferent, whether she was informed or ignorant of what was passing, or had passed, in this sublunary sphere.

The acquisition of the estate of the Rocks, by the death of his elder brother, made no alteration in his way of life. Sir Reginald, though he had married almost immediately after his cousin, had never forgiven the injurious preference shewn him. There was no intercourse between the families; and Mr. Melbourne, who saw no company, hardly ever looked at a newspaper, and by degrees almost prevented one from entering his peaceful habitation, was ignorant of events

and changes in the situation of those relatives, which had long been the subject of discourse among others, who might be supposed less interested in their causes.

This was not the only peculiarity in which Mr. Melbourne gradually indulged; an increasing reserve, and a singularity of habit and address, made the difference of years (though not too considerable) between himself and his lovely partner rather more than less perceptible, as they advanced in age. An innate elegance, a mind perhaps more formed to attend to the minutiae of life, and, above all, the desire, supreme in every female breast, to be pleasing in the eyes of him she solely loves, preserves, in woman, an attention to the forms of life, even without the checks imposed by mixed society: but man requires the collision of general opinion, the spur of vanity and emulation, to enable him to impose on himself, constantly, those restraints, which, to a mind intent on greater objects, may appear of trifling import, and importunate recurrence.

Thus, while Mrs. Melbourne retained as

much of the fine lady as it is possible to do without the least tincture of impertinence; her husband, happy, and sufficing to himself, without being naturally either proud, narrow, or unsocial, had gradually reduced himself to an almost anchorite state of simplicity and of solitude too, which, it never once occurred to him, while immersed in his favourite studies, the ladies of his family might begin not to relish quite so well as he did.

The "sensation" created by the unexpected appearance of Lady Torrendale among them, brought these opposite dispositions fully into light.

In her first address, Mrs. Melbourne acknowledged a tone of manners more congenial to her own, than any thing she had met with, since she had quitted the world of gaiety and fashion.

We have already said, this lady's exterior was prepossessing: and the circumstances of alarm and suffering under which she was introduced, had naturally excited an interest in her favour; which a languishing, sentimental air, in all her looks and actions, aided by eyes

that had been once the finest in the world, tended, at a first interview, not a little to increase. The deceit she had practised to gain admittance, with the ridiculous mistake that ensued, had not yet reached the heads of the family. The desire she had expressed for their acquaintance, was flattering; and it was under this impression, that Mrs. Melbourne, speaking to her husband of the recent visit, observed to him, "I hope you like our new neighbour, I think her a pleasant woman, and shall not delay, longer than to-morrow, my promised call."

"You are right, my dear," he replied, "and there, you know, the thing may drop."

"But I do not see why it *should* drop," returned Mrs. Melbourne. "Here is a woman of elegance, and apparently pleasing manners, whose acquaintance it may be of advantage to us to cultivate, and at whose house we may meet with some agreeable society."

"Society!" cried Mr. Melbourne, suddenly starting as if out of a dream; "I am sure I feel no want of it."

“ No ; but Matilda might, my love,” said his lady, smiling. “ When she was a child, I found, like you, every pleasure in retirement ; but now she is arriving at an age, in which her fortune and pretensions entitle her to an introduction into the world, I must no longer consult my own feelings alone, but renew, for her sake, the long-forgotten labours of company, balls, and parties.”

“ What can she possibly want with balls,” replied Mr. Melbourne. “ I always found them very tiresome things.”

“ Perhaps so might she ; but I have always been of the opinion of an elegant friend of our’s, that ‘ to indulge young people with a peep into the show-box of fashion,’ is the surest method to prevent that restless curiosity and feverish thirst for amusement, which is too often produced by exaggerated descriptions. They afterwards turn with redoubled pleasure to the refreshing calm of domestic society, when convinced of the fallacy of every other promise of enjoyment. For that reason, though I should be very sorry to see Matilda a slave to dissipation, I

own I could wish, that by being present at a concert or an opera, she should be able to form some idea of the miracles of an art, in which she excels so much; that she should see an interesting play, a pleasure in which, you know, she has never yet been indulged; that——”

“ She has no great loss,” interrupted Mr. Melbourne, who, having got hold of a large Encyclopædia, had suffered his wife to go on thus far, while he was hunting for an interesting article. “ Formerly the theatre was called a rational amusement; but now, as I hear from the best accounts, for I have not visited it myself these twenty years, noise, shew, and spectacle, entirely usurp the place of sense and nature.”

“ Surely not entirely,” cried Mrs. Melbourne. “ She would see some examples of the power the theatric art possesses over the passions, of which she can now form no idea; and as for noise, I hope you do not give that name to music.”

“ She has music enough in her own house,”



replied Mr. Melbourne, turning over the leaves of his Encyclopædia very fast.

“Come you are not attending to me; let us spare a few moments to discuss this subject, which may be of importance to the future prospects of our child, and lay aside that great book; I am sure you never got any good by your philosophical pursuits.”

“Good! Mrs. Melbourne,—did not I get the thanks of the Royal Society for my communications?”

“Yes, but I want to get the thanks of another ‘Society,’ for mine,” returned his lady, half laughing. “And I doubt, if grace, beauty and talent like Matilda’s, will not, when communicated, entitle me to as warm acknowledgments, as the most singular grass, or curiously formed shell, ever was the means of obtaining.” By ‘good,’ I mean of course, connection, advantage; I have the greatest respect for your studies, my love; but how would all the knowledge she could acquire in them tend to her establishment, without a little of

the *ton*, the polish, the *usage du monde*, which,"—

"And what is there pray in that world beyond what she now possesses?—with books, friends, and rational occupation, how can she wish for any thing more?"

"She does not, and for that very reason, I wish it for her;—hers is not a mind for which we need fear the contagion of society; the romantic tenderness of her disposition, rather points to the danger of absolute solitude in nourishing such a tendency to the destruction of her future peace."

At this moment the interesting subject of their dispute entered the room, eager

"Soon as the morning wreath had bound her hair,"

to relate the little incidents of her walk, and to enjoy again the unbounded freedom of social intercourse, in her domestic circle. She was accompanied by a gentleman, whose presence was always welcomed by the family with smiles of the most cordial friendship: though several years younger than Mr. Melbourne, a similarity of pursuits had rendered

Mr. Sowerby, of Clifden-down, a companion peculiarly acceptable to him. His visits were received with pleasure at all hours, and at all times. Nothing was concealed from him, and he was considered by Matilda, from her infancy, as her friend and preceptor.

Miss Melbourne, advancing lightly towards her mother, shewed her with pride and pleasure, a bird of extraordinary beauty, and singular plumage, which he had just knocked down among the rocks, and presented for her inspection.

Mr. Sowerby,—‘but he shall speak for himself.’—“What’s this I hear,” said he, his countenance changing from the expression of joyous friendship, to the gloomiest discontent, when he understood what had been the subject of the recent conversation.—“This fine lady, with her balls, and her fêtes, and her dashing, not contented with turning the heads of the whole county, has turned your head too, my good Madam, I see.”

“Not exactly that my dear sir, only pleased us, as the French say, ‘*Cela fait événement.*’”

"How I hate the French, and every thing that is French," said Mr. Sowerby, turning ten shades darker at this expression of Mrs. Melbourne's, who, to confess the truth, had made use of it, from pique, aware that her cynical neighbour (from some unknown cause), could not endure the name of that obnoxious nation. "I have just discovered," pursued Mr. Sowerby, "that the overturn was a mere trick, concerted between her and her people, to force herself into this family."

"Well, then the compliment was the greater, that you must allow."

"I have done, Madam, I see plainly how it is;—levity and dissipation, when graced by title, is a recommendation to all. I had hoped to see one family safe from the contagion of fashion, and folly, and frivolity, and vice;—but 'tis over, and I have done."

"Come, come, dear Sowerby," returned Mrs. Melbourne, with that playful superiority she knew so well at times how to assume. "You mistake this lady's character—don't begin to be cross;—don't be unreasonable."

“ But I will be cross, and I will be unreasonable,” cried Mr. Sowerby, his voice rising with increased passion, at what he probably deemed an infringement on one of his privileges :—“ Is it not enough to set a man mad to see one woman driving to the devil, and her neighbours all, all following her example.”

“ You are too severe upon this unoffending lady,” said Mrs. Melbourne. “ As Matilda is the person most interested in this question, we will refer to her opinion as to the impression she has made.”

“ I think her a charming woman, said Matilda ;” while, as she met the stern glance of her preceptor, timidity struggled with the rising glow of youthful and ingenuous feeling.

“ We do not yet know whether she deserves that title,” said Mrs. Melbourne, looking, in her turn, with anxiety at her innocent and enthusiastic daughter.

“ But she is certainly pleasing ; her husband is a character of the highest respectability ; and since she has been among us,

(turning to Mr. Sowerby,) she has surely done nothing to reflect discredit on her own."

"She is going as fast as she can the road to ruin," pursued that gentleman, whose general custom it was to follow the current of his own reflections, without disturbing himself to attend to the observations that might, from time to time, be made by others.

"Or, admit her to be a mere fine lady, what do you hope to gain by an intercourse with her?—is it to meet other company at her house?—To form an acquaintance with those trifling people, whom your sense and good taste, taught you formerly to despise? Is it to have the pleasure of paying an annual visit to my neighbour Sapling, where the good lady is always in such a bustle about her house and her family, that she is invisible to your enquiries—'where the men are all working out in the fields,' so that you are ushered by a dirty, half-asleep maid, with her hair in papers, into the front parlour, and then begged to go into the back drawing-room; which, being unswept, and the shut-

ters shut, is thought unworthy of your reception, and you are once more requested to move into the front drawing-room;—there you find all sort of litter and lumber that the children have left, and are intreated to walk from thence into the back parlour. You may then begin an animated conversation with the china cat on the mantle-piece, or the time-piece on the table, only interrupted by the occasional opening of the door, by some little urchin who peeps at you, laughs, and runs away; 'till at last down comes Miss, and despairing of manna's good behaviour, takes you round the grounds to amuse you during your visit.—The family are what is called making improvements; that is to say, spoiling and breaking up every thing, and you are dragged about with 'there's to be a shrubbery—and there's to be a lake—and here we will throw up a Chinese bridge—and there we are planning a gravel walk—'till, half dying with heat and fatigue, you are meditating a retreat, on any terms, when it is cut off by the good lady herself, who, all bustle and civility, is, 'quite sorry

she had not the power of seeing you sooner' and intreats you will not 'think' of going away without 'taking something.' And something you must take, under the penalty of having it forced down your throat. And 'this is worshipful society?' This is what you like, hey?"

"No my good Sir," said Mrs. Melbourne, taking advantage of an interval of silence. "but there are others."

"O yes there are others and blessed ones too—you like better the patrician civility of the stately Crossbrooks I suppose, where there is indeed no bustle of family management to be seen; where the mistress of the house receives you, sitting in state at the end of a long, lofty room, whose silent echoes seem awakened by your tread. There you find good Mrs. Crossbrook, surrounded by her daughters; prim, formal damsels who, if they look off their work for a moment, to gaze on the stranger, resume it again with a gravity worthy of an Archbishop, or a Lord Chancellor. Whether 'tis netting, or knotting, bobbin or bilboquet, no matter—the serious-

ness and -perseverance with which it is continued, are equally worthy of admiration. Meantime you make an abortive attempt at a languid conversation with the lady of the house, in which each observation seems half frozen in its passage to her ears, while the lady herself, if she now and then opes her marble jaws to deliver some remark, with a slowness and precision, that would do honor to a pupil of the instructors of the deaf and dumb, shuts them again with a manner that appears to say

“ Now my weary lips I close

“ Leave me, leave me to repose.”

and it is for that society you would exchange our pleasant solitude! That is your taste in forming acquaintance.”

“ You mistake me,” replied Mrs. Melbourne, who began to be tired of this harangue, “ Such company is not what I prefer, but if one mixes with the world—”

“ You do, you do,” continued Mr. Sowerby as usual, not attending to any one’s re-

marks but his own. "You like it, and why should you not? You have a right to chuse for yourself, and to finish your daughter's education your own way—It's all over with her I see very plainly. Once she has got balls, and parties in her head, where will be our instructive evening conversations, where our pleasant morning walks? Exchanged for senseless gaiety, all rational employment will be neglected, and idleness perfect idleness," he continued, violently jerking the end of a piece of muslin which Matilda was quietly sprigging, "will succeed to her former interesting occupations."

"You see things in too serious a light Sowerby," said the placid Mr. Melbourne, who by this time began to suspect that his friend was getting into an ill-temper; "you should not always anticipate the worst, my dear fellow, indeed you should not."

"It is nothing to me" resumed the amiable visitor, with that affected calmness which always announced, in him, that his displeasure had reached its greatest height. "I think young ladies should certainly amuse them-

selves if they like it, and amused, no doubt, your daughter will be, very much amused. 'Tis all very delightful, and if some old-fashioned people should venture to observe that they had hoped better things of Matilda Melbourne, she may very fairly reply that, with her youth and spirits, it is but natural, serious and sober avocations, should be looked upon with contempt, and their place supplied by gaiety, nothing but gaiety."

As he pronounced these last words, in that smothered tone of bitter and cruel irony, in which he particularly excelled, he fixed his eyes on the interesting girl, who was at this moment the subject of it, and whose countenance expressed so completely the reverse of the idea which his concluding reproof conveyed, that even the sternness of *his* censure gave way to softer feelings.

"Have I deserved this?" she said, looking at him with eyes swimming in tears.

All his harshness vanished at these words. Conscious he had been wrong, the excess of his regret was in danger of leading him into an extreme of indulgence equally unnecessary,

for his heart was naturally as good, as his temper was clouded and unamiable.

"You never could deserve reproof from me" he said, assuming his mildest and most affectionate manner. "I alone was to blame, in letting myself be betrayed, by a too anxious solicitude for your welfare, into hasty and intemperate expressions. Go fearlessly into that society you are so well fitted to adorn; with your principles, and your acquirements, I would not hesitate to trust you among all its dangers and allurements."

Then apologising to Mrs. Melbourne for the warmth into which he had been unintentionally surprised, he took leave; and Matilda, soon after, retired to her own apartment, to calm the agitation into which her spirits had been thrown by behaviour so unexpected and distressing.

"I am glad he is gone," said Mrs. Melbourne, as soon as the satisfactory sight of Sowerby striding across the lawn, secured her from any fear of being over-heard; "What can be his motive for wishing to withhold my daughter from the circle in which,

sooner or later, she must move, I cannot divine. Be it what it will, you must allow the bear grows every day more intolerable. None but Matilda can tame him."

"Then she had better marry him," Mr. Melbourne replied, as if he was not thinking of what he was saying.

"No my dear," returned his wife with earnestness; "estimable as Sowerby is in his character, and independent in his fortune, worlds would not tempt me to trust the happiness of my gentle, generous girl, to the caprice of a temper, gloomy, peevish, and discontented as his."

"Nor me neither I assure you my dear. I think Matilda far better as she is, for these twenty years to come. But as Sowerby's society is to me not only a resource, but an advantage, I beg you will not, by betraying your dislike to the uncouthness of his manners, render his visits less frequent."

"On the contrary I esteem him and do all in my power to like him; when he is absent I almost succeed; but, in his presence, my aversion sometimes rises to a degree I can

scarce suppress: there is a something about him that repels the good will, his merits tend to inspire; a kind of atmosphere of hatred that surrounds him, and that makes me breathe more freely when out of his sight. His causeless severity against the whole present system of things, prevents one's attending to his objections, even when they may be reasonable. In Matilda's case, you must perceive their absurdity. At Lady Torrendale's she may not meet with every thing I could wish united; but I look on such an introduction, as a discipline, a kind of preparatory school to initiate her a little into society, before she is herself called on to play her part in the great world."

"Well my dear, it shall be as you please. You know the coachman will be absent for a few days, as I could not refuse him the pleasure of a visit to his relation from Devonshire, whom he had not seen for so many years. As soon as he returns, you may pay this cursed visit."

With such friendly and disinterested sentiments to actuate their decision, these neigh-

bours determined to seek each other's society : and, after all the different interests were finally adjusted, in the debates that we have seen agitated at both houses, a frequent and agreeable intercourse was at length established, which appeared at first productive of equal advantages to each. The polished manners, and amiable, and intelligent mind of Mrs. Melbourne, always made her company peculiarly acceptable at Woodlands ; and when Lady Torrendale wished to charm her *ennui*, among the various objects of curiosity, that art and nature afforded, at the Rocks, she generally gave pleasure to the recluses, by the occasional liveliness of her conversation, and the novelty that the trifles she communicated, in their eyes, possessed. Mr. Melbourne, as yet not quite reconciled to the charms of female society, only desired to be warned of the approach of the "petticoats," as he concisely denominated the Countess of Torrendale and Miss Langrish, that he might retire to his pipe, his coffee, and his book. With Lord Torrendale he was obliged to be a little more ceremonious ; and their

meetings were not unlike the description of those that took place between two much greater men.

“ Awhile they on each other look,

“ Then, different studies chuse*.”

Mr. Melbourne turned to some work of scientific information ; and his Lordship amused himself, in a manner equally satisfactory, by studying, for the three hundred and sixtieth time that year, the list of both houses of parliament.

* Swift to Pope.

CHAP. V.

Non sai ben dir, s'adorna o se negletta
 Se caso od arte il bel volto compose;
 Di natura, d'amor, de' cieli amici
 Le negligenze sue sono artefici.

TASSO. GERUSALEMME LIBERATA.

Mais ne nous flattons point, et laissons le mystère,
 La sœur vous touche ici beaucoup moins que le frere.

RACINE. BRITANNICUS.

NOTWITHSTANDING Lady Torrendale's real or affected contempt for the neighbourhood that surrounded her, yet, as her's was one of those minds which demand a constant supply from without, she generally contrived to have a pretty numerous circle, to enliven her retirement at Woodlands.

To these, Matilda, till then almost unknown, formed a most welcome and pleasing addition: while, in the mixture of more general society, she lost that timidity which absolute solitude always creates, and every day disclosed some new charm of mind or disposition.

Her's had never been that excessive and distressing bashfulness, which rather argues a sense of defect, than a modest uncertainty of deserved success. This, her own inherent dignity and elegance of mind, and the education she had received, from a woman once familiar with a court, would have equally rendered absurd and misplaced. The diffidence of Matilda, was of a character more interesting and more true. It was the soft mist of a vernal morning, that increases the loveliness of the objects it covers, and which the first sun-beam of kindness easily dispels.

All her modesty was requisite to prevent the dangerous effects of the flattery, that was now poured in upon her, on every side, and

which was encouraged by the prevailing suffrage of Lady Torrendale.

The Countess, as her husband had predicted, soon lost her taste for stuffed birds, and Derbyshire petrifications; not so her predilection for Matilda, which seemed to increase with indulgence. For Mrs. Melbourne, her affection did not advance in an equal ratio. Without exactly allowing herself to think that lady excelled her in any thing, still she felt they differed, and that, in every point where a difference existed, the advantage was not on her side.

The eyes of the deity that presides over wit, are represented as possessing something at once bright, and terrible. Mrs. Melbourne, under an address the most feminine and insinuating, concealed a quick perception of the faulty and ridiculous in others; while a consciousness of her own mental superiority, gave to her manners an unbidden grace, and a dignity which commanded, without appearing to exact respect. Lady Torrendale in the midst of the airs of beauty and high-

bred elegance, which she had practiced so often, and with success, was sometimes surprised to find herself disconcerted and put out of countenance, by a glance of the eye from the recluse of the rocks. It has been said of the superior divinities, that they can conceal themselves from the inferior ones at pleasure ; but that the latter are not endowed, in return, with a similar privilege. Lady Torrendale would often fix her piercing eyes on Mrs. Melbourne, with an expression that indicated the consciousness there was something in her mind she could not fathom ; while all her own frivolities, follies, and weaknesses, lay exposed, and at the mercy of that lady's remark.

But with Matilda, the innocent, the cherub Matilda, no such severity or animadversion was to be feared. With all their added elegance, her manners possessed an artless frankness, and the observations she made, an originality, an air of freshness and vivacity, which she owed to her secluded life, and singular education ; and which had an inex-

pressible charm, in the eyes of one accustomed to the vapid affectation, and monotonous sameness of the often repeated copies from fashion's unvaried standard. Fearless, alike, of deceit or change, and delighted with the preference she had excited, Matilda returned her Ladyship's demonstrations of kindness with that confiding, that partial and warm affection, with which ingenuous youth is apt to look up to its superiors in age or knowledge, even more readily than to companions, and cotemporaries.

Not content with enjoying her society whenever she could draw the family of the Rocks from their retreat, the Countess made frequent appointments with her young friend to ride or walk. If these excursions continued 'till late, she was often pressed to take a bed at Woodlands, and her return was deferred till the following day. Whenever any accidental or domestic occurrence prevented the frequency of these meetings, elegant little billets written on pink paper, or in blue ink, where weeping figures, or emblematic flowers, on the embossed borders, denoted.

the grief and desperation of the forsaken Lady, were sure to pour in at the Rocks, and be the faithful messengers of her feelings.

Much, however, as Matilda valued and loved Lady Torrendale, she was sometimes when in conversation with her, obliged to acknowledge she discovered a mind that did not understand her's, and tastes in opposition to all those she had been taught to cultivate.

To a person accustomed, as she was, to find a pleasure in employment, the almost total idleness, to which every one was condemned at Woodlands, was in itself a drawback on the pleasure she enjoyed there. To take up a book, in the presence of Lady Torrendale, was high treason. Work, and all the other usual feminine resources, were equally prohibited. Music she could not bear; "she had so much of it with her daughter Emily and Miss Langrish." And if Matilda ever attempted to listen to that young lady, who really played very finely, her noble friend, though, perhaps, she had not spoken for some time before, immediately began buzzing in her ear, upon some uninte-

resting topic; "the sound of an instrument" (as she observed) "always putting her in mind of a thousand particular things she had to say." Her time was usually divided between the period she devoted to the glass,

"A' misteri d'amor ministro eletto"

eating, or driving out. The second was indeed an object of great importance with Lady Torrendale; and she contrived to make her meals of such frequent recurrence, and long duration, that the intervals between them were short; and these were filled up with lounging on the sofa, while she languidly listened to Matilda reading to her the letters of her London correspondents, which she was too indolent to look at herself; made corrections and alterations in the visiting book for the ensuing season; or amused herself, talking an ingenious kind of rhodomontade, principally composed of invective, castle-building, extravagant fancies, and vain regrets: to which, for want of a term more exclusively appropriate, we must be content for the present to give the general name of—Nonsense.

But, when the appearance of visitors at Woodlands roused her Ladyship from this last and favorite employment, the elasticity of her spirits was delightful; and, to introduce Matilda to the greatest advantage, seemed one of her principal and highest pleasures. On these occasions she was 'the most enchanting, the most fascinating girl that ever existed.' Whatever Miss Melbourne said and did was, of course, superior to what any body else could have said or done; and, in imitation of the '*Padrona*,' it was echoed around by the admiring circle, that 'nothing could be so charming as Miss Melbourne.' Two dissentient voices amid the general hum of applause, served as the music masters tell us of discords, only to make the according harmony of flattery "more sweet and beautiful."

To Miss Langrish, the governess, the youth and loveliness of Matilda were, (for some unacknowledged reason), particularly offensive. To Lord Torrendale, her imputed acquirements in science, though never ostentatiously brought forward, were equally the subjects

of disapprobation. Having once taken it into his head that she was, as he termed it, 'clever,' and that she would therefore indubitably lead his wife to make herself, in some new manner ridiculous, all her respectful attentions, and elegant gaiety, were equally unavailing, to conquer the haughty and repulsive coldness that was, in him, the consequence of this preconceived opinion.

"Indeed, my Lord, you should love Matilda," said Lady Torrendale, "she is the little bird of paradise, that comes spreading her gay wings over me in this solitude; the halcyon that brings a calm after the storm of my vexations."

"She has made you as romantic and fanciful as herself. This is one of your 'hobbies' at present, Laura, and will soon go to the tomb of the Capulets with your former successive predilections, for Madame Recamier, Kosciusko, the young Roscius, and the Persian Prince."

"Ah! no," replied her Ladyship, with a look which she meant should express sensibility, and which was really rather sentiment-

*

tal, "those were transient fancies; this, an attachment in its nature durable, as delightful."

"Will you venture a wager that no accident will have disturbed your sublime friendship before this day twelve-month?"

"Any you please. If I waver in my affection to my fair friend, I consent to spend another Christmas with you in this odious country."

"Agreed," replied her husband; and departed, very well satisfied with the morning's arrangement.

As the increasing severity of the season confined Matilda when at Woodlands more to in-door amusements, she often found a resource from the sameness of Lady Torrendale's conversation, in the intelligence and animation of Lady Emily Fitzroy. This amiable girl, now nearly twelve years of age, was peculiarly fascinated by the unassuming manners of Miss Melbourne, and spent every hour she could spare from other avocations in her apartment. One day, looking very earnestly at her, she suddenly exclaimed, "Will

you tell me truly, do you like Miss Langrish?"

Matilda, surprised at the singularity of the question, hesitated a moment for a reply; when Lady Emily continued very fast, "She is a good creature I believe, but not very wise. Nay, I know you will blame me for saying so," she added, with that frank and in-offensive vanity, sometimes so striking and amusing in very early youth; "you will think me unjust, because I am, myself, clever of my age: but all I ever knew in any branch of learning, I owe to my brother Strathallan. I shall never again pass such summers as we used to spend in Derbyshire together. Dear Strathallan, you are now far distant, and know not how I wish for you in all my walks and studies! When he was first in Spain, continued Lady Emily, after this little natural apostrophe, "he used to write to me; I think I will shew you some of his letters; they are so interesting, and contain such beautiful descriptions. No, I wont, they praise me so much; but there is one which does *not* praise me; and yet which

I love above all the rest. I had written him something, I do not now remember exactly what it was, but that it was complaining of my mother ; and, as she never was very kind to him, (for you know he is not *her* son,) I thought he would, of course, agree with me ; see what he says in return." As she spoke, Lady Emily put into Matilda's hand a letter, which, among much fraternal and affectionate advice, had the following sentence :—

" You were unhappy, you thought yourself ill-treated, my Emily, at the moment you let the expressions I have noticed escape from your pen. How often must you since have wished the transient dictates of vexation, or ill humour, unwritten ! You have the happiness of possessing your parent's warmest affection. Cherish it my dear girl as your most invaluable treasure. When Lady Torrendale is displeased with you, think you are unjust ; think she is in error ; think any thing but that her love can suffer a moment's diminution ; or if accidentally any real cause of complaint should arise, balance it with her thousand kindnesses, and let it remain buried

in your own bosom. I never knew the happiness of a mother's care; but I can fully conceive the charm it gives to the early part of our existence. How often, in your childish days, have I envied you even the reproofs that proceeded from a relation so dear!"

"Poor Strathallan!" said Lady Emily, as Matilda stood with her eyes fixed mechanically on the letter; "He says true, or perhaps he would not now be in Spain. No matter, every thing is for the best; is it not, Miss Melbourne? How often have I kissed and wept over this kind, this disinterested advice! It was, besides, the last letter I received from him. It is now long since we have heard from him, and I fear he has far different subjects to interest his thoughts, than the grief, the anxiety of his poor little Emily!"

Matilda had often heard Lord Strathallan mentioned as an officer of merit who had served with distinction in the Peninsula.

This interest was now increased by the anecdotes she was thus unexpectedly made

acquainted with, of his domestic character and disposition. This amiable Strathallan had then been her neighbour, had spent more than one summer at a spot so little removed from her residence ; and yet, only his name had reached her till now ; happy and contented, and having scarcely a wish to pass the bounds of her beloved retirement, she for the first time questioned the advantageousness of the perfect seclusion in which she had been bred up, and felt an undefined wish to extend the limits of her observation. Unconsciously charmed by the candour and artlessness of the detail she now heard, she gave a sigh for Lady Emily, who lost so much in losing the society of such a brother ; but cautioned her against the habit she had acquired of attributing all her improvements to his kindness and instruction before Miss Langrish ; “ she encourages me, and likes me to do so,” was the young lady’s reply ; and Matilda soon had a proof of the truth of the assertion.

On one occasion that Emily was expatiating on her favorite theme, “ Oh, Miss Mel-

bourne," said she, (turning to Matilda) " I am sure you would like my brother; he is all that is great and noble, united to a winning softness. You are the only person that reminds me of him."

" You are right, my dear," said Miss Langrish, " to cherish the remembrance of merit so distinguished; though, I confess, I cannot perceive the conformity of character you mention between Lord Strathallan and Miss Melbourne." " Alas!" she continued, in her most sentimental manner, " how much more must his absence make you feel the value of such a brother! He is a superior young man; a very superior young man indeed. Were I to draw an assemblage of all that is most exalted in nature, most refined by education; all that dazzles in the hero, all that captivates in the man, I should chuse for my example, and my model of united excellence, the character of Lord Strathallan."

Matilda gazed with surprise at Miss Langrish while she pronounced this animated panegyric, in a style so unlike her usual affected languor.

She had now sunk into her wonted attitude of pensive meditation ; her eyes cast on the ground ; her head resting on her hand ; and her whole appearance awakened in Miss Melbourne's mind, a momentary suspicion that she was one of those fair and conscientious instructors of youth, who think it much prettier to fall in love with the brother, than to attend to the improvement of the sister ; but, when she considered the rank, merit, and pretensions of the object to which she must, in that case, be supposed to aspire, the surmise yielded immediately to the very slender claims to admiration possessed by the young lady. Miss Langrish, joined, to a little insignificant figure, a round, pale, unmeaning face, rather marked by the small-pox, and which would have gone decidedly under the head of *une de ces figures dont on ne dit rien* ; but for a pair of grey eyes, which she forced into notice, by the persevering affectation of languishing softness with which they for ever rolled. Yet, still the animated and enthusiastic expressions she made use of on one subject, regardless of her situation ; one that called for double caution and cir-

cumspection of manner, rather favored the first idea; and it was still farther confirmed by the observation, that the time she allotted to practising music, (which was enormously disproportioned to her other studies, amounting to not less than six hours in the day,) was devoted, when she thought herself alone, to the indulgence of a sentimental melancholy; and that the brilliant difficulties of Steibelt, or the laboured intricacies of Von Esch, were exchanged for the easier and lighter charms of "*Ah perdona a primo affetto*;" or,

" Felice quel core;
Che langue d'amore."

Once, Lady Emily had excited a blush on the cheek of her young governess, by artlessly exclaiming, after she had finished an air which she was very fond of repeating, " That was a great favorite of Strathallan's before he left England." The sneer that a little discomposed the usually indolent countenance of Lady Torrendale, shewed the remark did not pass unobserved; and it was at least so far of use, as to make Beethoven

and his learned brethren for a time resume the places which had been usurped by *Innocenza's*, *Veneziana's*, and *Franca-lanza's*.

But, however Miss Langrish might excel in music, Matilda had soon reason to suspect she was not equally a proficient in other studies. Having risen early one morning, after spending the evening with her friends at Woodlands, and finding occasion to seek for a book which she had left the preceding night with Lady Emily in the apartment called, emphatically, the school-room, her ear was struck, as she passed along the corridor which led to it, by the murmur of a low voice, which she soon discovered to be that of Miss Langrish, reading or repeating something to herself. Matilda would have been surprised if she had known the subject of these early studies. They were notes "painfully" collected, to furnish replies to some of the numerous questions, which Lady Emily was in the daily habit of asking; some were for the improvement of the pupil, a great many to rectify the ideas of the much more ignorant governess. Here were some of the principal ones :

“ Memorandum.—To look into the dictionary for the meaning of the word “ Oblivion;” also for the difference between the words Armistice, Amnesty, and Amity.

“ Mem.—(For Geography). Tartary and Tartarus are two different places. The latter, I believe, fabulous. The former somewhere near Spa. Also St. Helen’s, and St. Helena, not synonymous.

“ Mem.—To look in the Biographical Dictionary for lives to correspond to the three names so often mentioned, Tamerlane, Tamarisk, and Tamarind.

“ Mem. — (For History.) Heptarchy means seven kingdoms, and not five; heptarchy, being the old English word for ‘seven.’

“ Mem.—To call William the Second, William Rufus, not ‘Rueful,’ as I did by mistake the other day. It was he, not William the First, that was killed by an arrow in the *New Forest*, as it is still called; though I should think it must be, by now, near a hundred years old.

“ Mem.—It was Mary, Queen of Scots, whose head was taken off, not bloody Queen

Mary ; whose name seems to import she had undergone such a fate.

“ Mem.—The Rye-House plot does not mean a combination against the dealers in rye.

“ Mem.—Algernon Sidney, Sir Philip Sidney, and Sir Sidney Smith, are three different personages.”

Miss Langrish had committed the whole of these valuable and miscellaneous remarks to memory, as far as the preceding sentence ; and how much farther still she might have advanced, must for ever remain unknown, for the entrance of Matilda, at this moment, put an end to her studies, and forced from the young lady, a faint scream of surprise and terror, upon the appearance of a visitor at so early and unexpected an hour ; while some well studied volumes of modern “ Horrors,” which peeped from beneath the huge quartos of English, French, and Italian literature that covered the table in the shape of grammars, histories, and dictionaries, accounted for the extreme susceptibility of her nerves to impressions of sudden alarm.

"Have I disturbed you?" said Matilda, as she advanced seraph-smiling, and turned upon Miss Langrish a look, which another might have died to obtain, but which in her bosom excited only suspicion and dread.

"Nay, am I then so very alarming?" continued the lovely girl, endeavouring to calm the agitation of her companion. "Believe me, I did not mean to intrude."

"I trust you did not," said Miss Langrish, by a great effort, recovering herself, and darting at the unwelcome visitor, a glance that seemed to wish to penetrate her inmost soul. I trust Miss Melbourne is incapable of prying into the secrets of others; or, if chance should discover them to her, of revealing them to their disadvantage."

Matilda, who had not distinguished one word of the precious notes Miss Langrish had been scanning, preparatory to her morning's lesson, assured her with great simplicity, that her coming was quite accidental, and that she was still ignorant of the reason why it should cause so much perturbation.

The young lady paused a moment; doubts

of the sincerity of this statement, struggled with resentment and dislike. At length, believing it most politic to secure the friendship of Matilda, she said to her, in her softest and most conciliatory tone, "the fears I may naturally experience from the effects of Miss Melbourne's superior penetration are *vanished*, when I reflect on the benignity, the condescending sweetness with which it is accompanied."

"Pray, Miss Langrish, do not think yourself obliged to address such praises to me," said the ingenuous Matilda, disgusted with flattery from one who, she felt assured, had never viewed her with kindness. "If this is meant to prevent my telling Lady Torrendale that I found you employed here at this early hour, you may depend upon my discretion, though ignorant of the reason why it should be necessary. I have found the book I was looking for. Permit me to wish you good morning."

Fearful of the dangerous effects of a half confidence, the young governess thought it best, since she had gone thus far, to trust

herself entirely to Matilda; therefore, stopping her as she was leaving the room, she added, "You cannot but have observed, Miss Melbourne, the nature of the employment you allude to; but I know you have that indulgence which is ever ready to excuse those deficiencies in others, which you, could never have experienced in yourself. Can you blame me for endeavouring, though late, to improve myself during those hours that I can steal from my daily duties?"

"You are certainly right," replied Matilda, "is there any thing in which you wish my assistance? if not, you must permit me to retire."

"Will you really assist me?" said Miss Langrish with eagerness; "and will you promise faithfully never to tell again; then there is a doubt which I will confide to you, and which has been for a long time an obstacle to my improvement; look at these three crabbed words," she continued, pointing to a grammar that lay on the table. The words were Participle, Preterite, and Pre-

position. " They are my constant torment, you see they all begin with the same letter, as if on purpose to puzzle people. Yet I should think there must be some difference between them. Can you explain it to me more clearly ?"

Matilda hesitated a moment, hardly believing the request could be seriously made, but on its being repeated, with earnestness, she complied ; endeavouring to make herself understood by the choice of the clearest terms she could select.

" Now that was very prettily said, my dear young lady," cried Miss Langrish, " and if you would favor me with the same explanation once more, I am sure I could retain it."

Ever ready to oblige, Matilda consented. When she had concluded, her companion declared if Miss Melbourne would allow her to trespass so much upon her kindness, she felt herself assured that the third time she should understand the distinction completely. To this Matilda agreed.

" Well Miss Melbourne," said the young

Lady, gazing on her with an expression of unfeigned, and hopeless admiration, "you are very happy, in that clearness of intellect, which enables you to comprehend these things. For my part they quite go beyond me: but for God's sake don't tell Lady Torrendale, and I am sure she will not find me out. You know it is not intended I should teach without the book, and with the book in my hand I do as well as another."

Rather amused than burthened by this strange confidence, Matilda found, in the preceding scene, sufficient matter for wonder and reflection—She would have been still more surprised, if she had heard, that Lady Torrendale, too indolent to examine and enquire herself, and too vain to refer to the opinion and judgement of another, had at once accepted Miss Langrish at the hands of her intimate friend Mrs. Murray; who did not think it necessary to mention she was the daughter of a favorite servant. That, with hardly any other advantages of education, she had been instructed in music; a talent in which her voice and ear qualified her to

excel, with a view to produce her acquirements on the stage. That her deficiency in genius, and in that most powerful apologist for the want of it, beauty, making her prospect of success more than dubious, she had adopted the idea of applying the only accomplishment she possessed to the purpose of private tuition; but Mrs. Murray, knowing her noble friend was at this time in want of an instructress for her daughter, and thinking such a situation still more eligible for her *protege* had assisted her with her warmest recommendation, and thus transformed an indifferent music-mistress into a very bad governess.

CHAP. VI.

Avea

Bionde le chiome, oscuro il ciglio. i labbri
Vermigli sì : un arossir frequente.

***** METASTASIO.

Bruno sei tu, ma bella
Quel vergine viola ; e del tuo vago
Sembriante io sì m'appago.

TASSO.

L'AMITIE' disparaît où légalité cesse.
Matilda had reason soon to acknowledge the truth of this remark. There was too little real sympathy between the feelings of a coquette and fine lady of eight-and-thirty, and an innocent, unconscious charmer of eighteen, to allow the name of friendship to be given to their now habitual intercourse. With the young ladies whom she met occasionally at the house, she found it equally difficult to

form a pleasing intimacy. In default of the *fashionables* to whom Lord Torrendale had, in a manner, forbidden the house, her Ladyship was obliged to content herself with a set of second-rate, well-meaning damsels (the best the country afforded) who found no other consolation for their own mediocrity, than in setting themselves violently against every thing that presumed to rise, though in the smallest degree, above their most moderate standard of excellence. The dazzling effect produced by Matilda's appearance among them was over; and now, one venture to hint a fault; another, to whisper a mistake, secure of its being received, if not with an approving smile, at least without any violent expression of indignation on the part of the Countess. Of such cabals Matilda felt the oppressive influence, without being able exactly to define in what it consisted.

Conscious of no intentional impropriety, she had entered life, expecting to find, in society, that openness, that mutual confidence and simplicity, which form the charm of domestic intercourse. To keep a constant

guard upon her looks and words, to check the exalted sentiment, to curb the spontaneous burst of feeling, lest it should encounter the cold sneer, or suppressed smile, with which it was sure to be received by the well-bred circle, was most painful to her. The desire to please, with which she had at first been animated, was fast changing into solicitude to avoid censure: and her mind, in acquiring firmness and experience, was in danger of losing some of its most touching charms and graces. The country that is put under a state of defence, must submit to see some of its natural beauties defaced, and its finest edifices destroyed, by those very precautions which are taken to secure the safety of the whole.

A circumstance in which the Countess preferred applying to Matilda, to having another, less indulgent, the witness of her embarrassment, recalled her from her temporary estrangement. One day in talking over her plans for the morning, she said she should alter the course of her usual airing, having some purchases to make, and a visit

to pay in the neighbouring town. You did not know, perhaps, (she observed archly smiling) that I had connexions there to keep up; but I assure you I have more acquaintances than you dream of—or than I wish for. In a lower tone the sentence was concluded.

They drove up straight to a handsome brick-built house, which appeared to belong to a person of considerable consequence in the town. Lady Torrendale pulled the check, and enquired if Mrs. Stockwell was at home. Being answered, by a powdered footman, in the negative, “never mind that,” exclaimed her Ladyship; and springing from the carriage, she desired Matilda also to alight. They passed into a very elegant parlour; and the Countess ordering the housekeeper to be called up, asked her, with the air of a person enquiring into the state of the larder of an Inn, if there were nothing to eat in the house.

“Your mistress has gone out,” said she, “but she cannot have left it unprovided—Let’s see your bill of fare.”



The obsequious gentlewoman seemed, too well used to such arbitrary mandates to be surprised by them, and quickly obeyed, by serving up an elegant collation. Her Ladyship, after she had partaken of it with much apparent appetite, turned to Matilda, and said, in a laughing tone, "You think me a strange mad creature; but I know what I do, and where I do it—," she leant over to finish in a whisper the last words. Then, flinging herself on a sofa, she exclaimed fretfully, "very odd this creature don't come home—I have but half an hour (looking at her watch) to stay—she should not have gone out."

"She did not know, perhaps, she was to expect the honor of your Ladyship's company."

"She did not know it—but every fine day she knew it was——possible, and therefore it was her duty to wait for me."

Having pronounced, with a conclusive nod, this decision, which Matilda (being unacquainted with the merits of the cause) did not attempt to controvert, the Lady amused herself for some time in silence with her own

reflections, till they were suddenly interrupted by the return of the mistress of the house. Running up to her with all the demonstrations of the most cordial friendship, Lady Torrendale advanced to Mrs. Stockwell with open arms, passed her pretty head across her shoulder, and continued for some moments in that attitude, in a long, whispering embrace—Their harmony, however, was near having been disturbed by an unfortunate error.

Mrs. Stockwell, after properly expressing the delight she felt at seeing her dear Countess, added, as she turned to Matilda, “and this, Mem, I suppose is your Ladyship’s eldest daughter.”

“You remind me of my error” (said Lady Torrendale, drawing up with some disdain) in not introducing Miss Melbourne before—Yet I should have hardly imagined you could have mistaken her for Emily.”

“Bless me, true! what a clumsy creature I was to do so. I that is so *intimate* too with your Ladyship” continued Mrs. Stockwell, in a kind of coaxing tone. “How could I think you had a daughter so old,

When I know Lady Emily is not more than thirteen."

"Twelve" said lady Torrendale.

Mrs. Stockwell, by redoubling the most fawning servility, endeavoured to efface the impression her error had unluckily made; but she found it was not so easy to remove the cloud that had gathered on the brow of the Countess. On Matilda's being introduced to her, she presented, in return, a young lady who accompanied her, and whom Lady Torrendale seemed to have known before: "I hope my neice, Miss Ferrars, will be great friends, Mem, with Miss Melbourne," she said.

The young Lady bowed in silence to Matilda, and then took her station as close to her aunt as possible. If the countenance be a true index to the mind, few could boast of one more interesting. It was clear, open, and ingenuous; yet had a depth and penetration very uncommon in early youth; it was like the calm bosom of some rich and lovely stream, the surface of which is smooth and beautiful, but which betrays, through its

crystal medium, that treasures more rare and precious are below. Such at least was the language of a pair of the finest dark eyes in the world, which a quantity of ringlets, almost flaxen, contrasting with a complexion smooth, delicate, but of a clear brown, rendered still more singularly impressive and striking. Her figure was tall, slender, and finely formed; and if her features had nothing in them particularly to attract attention, still, a general elegance of contour made the best apology for the absence of positive beauty.

While Matilda was endeavouring, but in vain, to draw this young Lady a little into conversation, Mrs. Stockwell was, on her part, busily employed in paying her compliments to the Countess: and was so delighted, so overwhelmed, with the honor of her visit, that she found it perfectly impossible to divide her attentions, at the same time that she thought it her duty to notice Miss Melbourne, as the friend of Lady Torrendale.

The latter, who had not forgiven her unlucky mistake respecting the age of Lady Emily, delighted in pointing out to Matilda

the awkward attempts she made to that purpose, by a stolen look, which, often put her gravity to the utmost proof. Mrs. Stockwell had been lately at Cheltenham, and Lady Torrendale asked her if there was much company when she was there.

“ O no your Ladyship—stay, I’ll tell you who there was—dear me, I’m so bad at recollecting people’s names, when they have not some sort of a title before them. All I can assure your Ladyship is, they was a set of despicable creeters, as seemed people of no account, or edication whatever. Bell and I, and your son Captain Fitzroy, made one party all the time we staid—as to the rest—Pray Miss Melbourne do you read much?” Before Matilda had time to reply to this abrupt question, which Mrs. Stockwell, from the character she had heard of her, thought she had addressed with the discrimination and appropriateness of an experienced Minister at a Levee, the lady had turned again to the Countess with a continuation of her account of Captain Fitzroy.

“ Has not he written your Ladyship word

the Cheltenham waters did him all the good in the world? When he first drove Bell in his tandem there, he looked so pale, and so pensive like—it was plain to be seen the wars had taken away all his fine complexion, and I declare I could not help piping to think—” a pause, from some unknown reason, unless it was an imperceptible hint from the young Lady who sat next her, reminded the company that a slight error of expression had been committed—but Mrs. Stockwell recovering from this momentary check continued—

“ When I used to play cards at their parties and dances, (take care of Miss Melbourne, Bell, my love)—and he used to lean over the back of my chair in his way, for he was too ill to dance, a lady at the table whispered to me one night, ‘ I can’t mind my game for the countenance of that young Officer; it is so *interesting*’. And to be sure it *was interesting*: so like your Ladyship’s, and yet so marble pale—which his black eye-brows, and whiskers, don’t you call them, strait things on the upper lip.”

"Very like my Ladyship," interrupted Lady Torrendale, with a toss of her head and half laughing; while Mrs. Stockwell made a sudden digression from the dark whiskers, again to address Matilda, with "pray Mem don't you find it very lonesome at the Rocks?"

"No Madam," said Matilda, a little provoked, "I never am so happy as when I am there."

"True, I had forgot," resumed Mrs. Stockwell, in a sentimental tone; "As the Poet says, *One is never so much alone as in a croud*.—Reading is every thing as I take it, for my part I doat upon study. When Captain Fitzroy used to get the novels for Bell at the Library—(addressing Lady Torrendale) by the bye Mem (turning again to Matilda) could you have imagined, to look at this lady, that she could be the mother of a son old enough to be the darling of all the Cheltenham Belles?"

"No, indeed, and I hate to think of it," cried the Countess, interrupting her.

"Apropos," resumed Mrs. Stockwell, with

an air of greater familiarity than she had yet assumed, "when are we to see our dear little Fitzroy?"

"Captain Fitzroy" replied Lady Torrendale, rather haughtily, "gives us hopes of seeing him towards the latter end of this month; and then" (she continued in a lower and more subdued tone) "he will settle every thing."

"Ah, Lady Torrendale, so you writ me when you was at Rose-villa, and yet nothing was done."

"Rose-villa was sold, and I was carried off suddenly from it—so I had not time to give you a meeting there, or —"

"You were carried off suddenly," (said Mrs. Stockwell in a tone of sympathising condolence) "and I am sure I would be the last person in the world to add to your Ladyship's inconveniences, but"—Here another long whispering conversation ensued; and Matilda being left entirely to herself again, attempted to engage the attention of the young Lady by some general observations; to which she replied, with politeness indeed, but as concisely as possible: and then sunk

again into silence : yet, to judge by the intelligence and vivacity of the eyes, that spoke through those long, dark, silken lashes, Miss Ferrars was far, indeed, from being to be ranked with that class so admirably denominated by Madame d'Arblay, the "Sul-lens"—Forced to give up the idea of entering into conversation with this young Lady, Miss Melbourne was obliged to content herself with such fragments of Lady Torrendale and Mrs. Stockwell's discourse, as happened to reach her ear; but it was carried on in so low a key, that she could distinguish little more than the words, Duke, Earl, Countess, General, Admiral, Court, and Park, frequently repeated; particularly on the side of the lady of the house; whose appearance did not quite justify her evident familiarity with such exalted subjects. Her eyes were always what first struck the observation of a stranger; there was a deceitfulness, a *feline* watchfulness in their slow, treacherous roll, which warred most completely with the affectation of sensibility she tried to throw into them; and which would have inspired

a feeling resembling terror, if an expression of meanness, that mingled with it; had not changed it to contempt. For the rest, her short squat figure made the most perfect contrast to the airy elegant form of lady Torrendale: her features were bad, her complexion coarse, and her whole appearance and contour sufficiently indicative of vulgarity.

At length, Lady Torrendale, suddenly appearing to recollect herself, started up, saying, "I must not let this foolish little affair make me forget the principal object of my visit, which was to secure your company my dear Mrs. Stockwell, and that of Miss Ferrars, (bowing to the young lady who stood beside her) for to-morrow, at Woodlands."

Mrs. Stockwell looked confounded—"Positively no, my dear lady, it can't be to-morrow; for my companion, Miss Hautenville, (and I never goes any where without my companion) is engaged on a dinner party at Farley, and the next day she wants the carriage to go to her friend Lady Bunbury's, and the next she has planned a little, "ca-

“crescence” to Stanmore vicarage; a relation of her’s having married Dr. Hartley, the gentleman, as was “indited” into that living after the death of Dr. Waring, the late “Incumbrance.”

Lady Torrendale gave Matilda one of her wicked conscious glances; and she, to avoid noticing it, turned her eyes towards Miss Ferrars.

That young lady had often before given symptoms of fretful uneasiness; but now, her large dark eyes were cast upon the ground, as if she could wish to forget the presence of all around her, and her cheeks glowed like crimson. “You teach me something new every time I visit you,” cried the lively Countess.

“I thought the very words ‘my companion,’ implied a person whose company I was to command; but I find that in Mrs. Stockwell’s dictionary it means ‘any one’s companion but one’s own.’” “Oh, you know, I cannot contradict her,” resumed the good lady, with great gravity, “for she is of a very good family, and had very good prospects, ’till she

was unfortunately reduced, and that—and she never lived but with very high people; Lady Bunbury—and the great Miss Mountain, 'till she 'done' me the honor to come 'and stay with me'”

“Then you certainly do right, my dear Mrs. Stockwell, to make her descent from the 'Mountain', 'as easy as possible,” resumed Lady Torrendale laughing.

“But after that little 'excrescence,' you mentioned, if Miss Hautenville should happen to be disengaged, may I hope for the pleasure of *her* company, *with* yours and Miss Ferrars.” The affair being thus adjusted, her Ladyship and Miss Melbourne, soon after, took leave: and the former was hardly well-seated in the carriage, when she burst into a fit of painfully suspended laughter, in which she indulged both “loud and long.” Young as she was, and new to the world, Matilda could not avoid suspecting that her noble friend endeavoured to hide, under the appearance of boisterous mirth, a degree of shame and uneasiness she could not repress, at having made her the

witness of an intimacy so disproportionate. Why she had voluntarily submitted to this mortification, she was unable to guess ; but that it was in order to gain some favourite point, she was by this time, too intimate with Lady Torrendale to doubt for a moment."

"You must let me go on," said her Ladyship, after she had indulged for a few moments in this extravagant humour—"what mortal gravity could sustain what I have endured this half hour ? but it was for your sake, Matilda," she continued, with a condescending nod. "I wished to introduce you to that sweet girl, Arbella Ferrars, and you shall meet her again on Thursday ; she is amiable, though an heiress—has been very genteelly brought up, though early left an orphan under the care of her aunt ; and can be very agreeable, though not quite so communicative as the said Aunt Stockwell. There, have I not drawn you a very good impromptu character, made up of opposites, like a French *Portrait* ?"

Matilda well knew that all this rattle was only meant, like the action and volubility of

a slight-of-hand man, to turn her attention from the simple fact, that Lady Torrendale wished her company on the day the Stockwell's were expected, to take off from herself part of the weight of a kind of duty, which her Ladyship always denominated a 'bore,' or, in her still more favorite phrase, a '*Corvée*.'

Appreciating her Ladyship's disinterested kindness, therefore, at just as much as it deserved, she did not on that account, the less readily accept her offer, which the desire she had to be farther acquainted with the amiable, though reserved Arbella, rendered peculiarly agreeable. Triumphant, at having gained her point, Lady Torrendale announced it at dinner, when, mentioning her visit, "we shall have a beau for Matilda, I hope," (she continued) "for I have made it a point with Mrs. Stockwell that her son should join the party if he should arrive in time from Worcestershire, whence he is daily expected, to spend the Christmas holidays. What say you child to the rich Sam Stockwell? I assure you he is mama's only pet, and is now by the

death of his father, master of a very large fortune, which those eyes can, if you please, assuredly make your own, instead of the fair, or, I should rather say, the brown Arbella's.

Matilda, in order to parry this raillery, took the first opportunity to make some enquiry respecting Mrs. Stockwell and her family.

"She is a very good woman," observed Lord Torrendale, drily. "Her mother sold apples."

"Oh you ill-natured creature!" cried the Countess, putting her hand upon his mouth. "You do not mention that her husband, (which is Arbella's side of the family, by-the-by,) was a very respectable man, a blanket merchant, or a carpet merchant: or, I protest I don't know exactly what, and that though she confesses she was raised by marriage a little above her actual situation, she says her grand-father was a general, and her great-grand father an archbishop. "Let Bourbon or Nassau count higher."

"Lady Torrendale, you know that is one

of poor Mrs. Stockwell's manias. Enquire a little farther, and she will probably make out the reigning family allied to her own. How you first became acquainted with the Scythian, or how you can endure her, it passes my penetration to discover."

"Oh, *that* you must ask Spencer," replied her Ladyship, with a mysterious smile. Then turning suddenly to Matilda, "did she not launch out finely in his praise to day?" she said, "It was little, compared to what Spencer Fitzroy deserves," she added, in a more tender tone. "He is a young man, in this age, I believe, seldom equalled." At first, Miss Melbourne was not aware that Lady Torrendale, alluded to her son Captain Fitzroy; and even when she had discovered her friend's meaning, she did not immediately reply, owing to a slight confusion she felt at so pointed a reference.

"Do you not know who I am speaking of? Have you not heard of him before?" continued her Ladyship impatiently.

"Excuse me, Madam, I have often heard Lady Emily speak of her brother."

“ Oh! by *her brother*, Emily always means, *that* Strathallan—he is the chit’s brother *par excellence*. Yet Spencer excels him as much as ———. Well we expect him here soon, and then you shall judge for yourself.” Thinking it necessary at length to finish this ‘*aside*’ conversation, the Countess said aloud, with her usual attention to truth, “ I have been recommending to Matilda seriously to think of the merits of Sam Stockwell. Like the dear father, he deals a little in carpetry, or *Marqueterie*, or whatever it is, and he jobs in the stocks; and, in short, does every thing that turns money; so she *shall* have him in spite of your uncivil insinuations, you wicked aristocratic man!”

CHAP. VII.

From worldly guile,
From Folly's mask, from Cunning's wile,
Keep thy generous bosom free,
And cherish sweet Simplicity.

'Tis Wisdom's guard, 'tis Virtue's friend,
On it a thousand goods attend,
A thousand goods in store for thee,
Thou favorite of Simplicity.

ON the day appointed, at exactly half-past six, arrived at Woodlands, Miss Hautenville and suite, consisting of Mrs. Stockwell, her niece, Miss Ferrars, and her son Mr. Samuel Stockwell. The moment the carriage was seen driving up the avenue—Lady Torrendale, who had been the whole morning doing nothing, said to Matilda, “now I must run and dress myself for these good folks; and do you entertain them till I

return;—how kind it was of you to come so early!” Scarcely had her Ladyship escaped, when in bustled Mrs. Stockwell, almost ‘standing on end’ with finery. She was followed by Arbella, drest with a united richness and elegance well suited to her youth, her figure, and pretensions: while Miss Hautenville, who was enabled, by the generosity of her friend, to make a display of almost equal expence, if not equal taste, seemed by her air to think she did her too much honor in accepting her benefits. This lady was to be introduced to Matilda, as well as Mr. Stockwell, an ugly, conceited young man, with the pride of wealth written on every feature. This business over, the next great difficulty was to get Mrs. Stockwell, and consequently the rest of the company, seated. Her town vulgarity, transplanted into the country, had flourished into a kind of double blossom, of superfluous politeness, which was sometimes rather troublesome. It was to be feared, that neither persuasion nor threats could shake her unalterable determination to remain next the door.

"No, Mem, I thank ye, I set very well here," she obstinately replied to every endeavour to make her go up higher; and would thus have reduced the two ladies with her, to the alternative of committing the dreadful indecorum of taking place above her, or staying outside the room, had not Matilda "with sweet violence," at length almost compelled her to go to her only proper seat.

Sam Stockwell, to mark that he had been hurried, and was just arrived, had thought proper to come in boots, which did not augment the natural gentility of his appearance. Displaying the airs, without the elegance, of a fashionable lounge—he, with dull, sullen coldness, which he mistook for languid ease, sauntered about the room in silence, often looking around him with fretful discontent, or only testifying his existence by a yawn.

The company at length being seated, the first quarter of an hour was employed by Mrs. Stockwell in apologies, which she might have perceived, by some circumstances, were very unnecessary, for the lateness of her ar-

rival. Miss Hautenville, she said, had wanted the "Brush," and pair, that morning, to visit a friend, who had detained her rather longer than she expected; and to be sure, if it was a brush and four, Miss Hautenville had a right to be served first."

The lady, in reply, looking at her with an air of sovereign contempt, said "she was sure nobody could complain, with less reason, than Mrs. Stockwell, of not being indulged in the use of her carriage. That, for her part, she hardly ever took it; and that there was not a person in the world, she believed, whose wishes and convenience were less considered than hers."

Her wealthy friend humbly recanting what she had before advanced, gave a full assent to all that was asserted by the vain and assuming companion.

Designed, originally, to move in the humblest sphere, Mrs. Stockwell, after a fortunate marriage with a wealthy tradesman, found her happiness still incomplete, because, that very marriage removed her from the scene of her earlier connexions, to whom she was

desirous of displaying her newly acquired opulence and finery. Immediately on finding herself a widow, she laid out part of her very ample settlement in the purchase of a handsome house in her favourite neighbourhood; and soon after prevailed on a lady to take up her abode with her, whose advantages of birth and education, would, she thought, atone for any deficiencies in her own. Miss Hautenville, who had never been handsome, and was now no longer young; her temper soured by the disappointment of her early expectations, and her taste refined by the long habit of company rather above her, proved a most troublesome household divinity; and after making some vain attempts on the heart of Mr. Stockwell, revenged herself by behaving with the most constant and marked impertinence to his mother, and to Miss Ferrars, whom she considered, and not without reason, as, in part, the cause of her failure. This young lady, whose mother was sister to the late Mr. Stockwell, had been left, on the death of her parents, under his guardianship; a trust which he, from the ut-

deserved affection and confidence he reposed in his wife, made over to her, at his decease, with a clause in his will, that his niece should reside with her, till she became of age, while the management of her pecuniary affairs devolved, till that period, upon his son, Mr. Samuel Stockwell. This young man, though still possessed of a considerable interest in his father's carpet manufactory, at Kidderminster, did not think so close an attention to business either necessary or becoming, and rather preferred acting the part of a gentleman at large at his mother's, who encouraged his frequent absences from his settled abode. If she had ever ventured to form a plan, it was that of securing Arbella's fortune, to her son, by marriage; she therefore wisely consoled herself by observing "that when Sam seemed to be most neglecting his interest, he was in reality following it up to the greatest advantage." Matilda was glad when the entrance of some more company relieved her from the task of entertaining this ill-assorted group.

After dinner, the Countess, who had heard that Miss Hantenville made some pretensions

to literature, and hated her for it, whispered to her young friend, "have you no new music my dear; play, sing, do any thing that may hinder the wise lady from talking. I hate those sort of women. I don't know what to do with them, unless I mortify them."

Matilda, unwilling to comply with a request for which such a motive was avowed, yet thought it better to consent, than to resist the reiterated entreaties of every one present. While she charmed, and Miss Langrish astonished, their little auditory, by the talent they displayed, Miss Hautenville, seated apart from the rest of the group, appeared perfectly absorbed in looking over a book of classical drawings, she had probably seen a hundred times before; but which, if one might judge by the noise and pertinacity with which she hastily turned over the rustling leaves, she found at this moment particularly interesting. With eyes obstinately rivetted to the book, she saw the picture of malice and discontent, till her features, naturally sharp, absolutely assumed the sharpness of a well-

mended pen. Her vexation nearly arose to a crisis, when Lady Torrendale, determined that no pause should be left for conversation, proposed looking over Emily's port-folio of drawings, as soon as the music was over: but scarcely were they produced, when her lively ladyship joyfully exclaimed, "Oh! here come the gentlemen at last, just in time to save us from hanging!"—"And drawing," Miss Hautenville muttered, finishing the sentence for her more truly.

These were some neighbouring squires whom Lord Torrendale had invited; and who, after coffee, again got together into a knot, which Sam Stockwell, rather than approach the ladies, was willing to join.

One or two of the youngest of the party, attracted by the "soft and shaded eyes" of Arbella, had endeavoured to engage her attention; but with the same ill-success Matilda had experienced. In modest silence, she had seated herself at one end of a sofa, below every other woman, and seemed to have no wish but to remain unnoticed; yet

in her the charms of countenance, of form, and air -

“ Et les graces encore plus belles que la beauté,”

pleaded so strongly, that she pleased without speaking, and all the gentlemen, at least, were unanimous in the opinion, though they knew not exactly what made them form it, that she certainly was agreeable. On her cousin, Sam Stockwell, the judgment they pronounced was not so favourable. He was generally voted to be a “stupid, conceited prig;” and he, surprised to find himself in a society where his money did not make him of consequence, returned their dislike with interest.

Their conversation, which chiefly turned upon country matters, was to him nearly unintelligible. The birth and breeding of a pointer, and the life and death of a pheasant or a hare, were equally subjects of which his habits made him an indifferent judge. Hardly knowing what it was to enjoy the pleasure of a day's shooting, the varied tale of each triumphant sportsman was as uninteresting to

him, as the language in which it was conveyed was new. The words "Pop!" and "Bang!" carried with them no gladness to his heart; neither did it beat with anxiety at stories of the invasion of manorial rights, by tremendous captains or riotous esquires. He was not of that consequence in the county to make his opinion a reference, whether Lord P—, or Lord C—, had the greatest influence in the borough of Addleham, or whether the present sheriff was likely to be as much respected as his predecessor. While these discussions were going on, he sat looking as discontented as the united powers of mortified pride and ill-humour could make him, till, at last, abruptly rising, he strolled towards his cousin Arbella, and seemed going to place himself next her as a matter of right, when she, with a "withering look," made him step some paces back; and Miss Hautenville, spinning the little gentleman round with an arbitrary twirl, sent him over, with the impetus of a te-totum, to Miss Langrish; at the same time whispering him, that "if he knew any thing of life," he would per-

ceive it was one of the young ladies of the house he ought to entertain."

Sam looked at the lady assigned to him, and then—very deliberately walked to the window.

Miss Hautenville having now disposed of the company to her own satisfaction, began the design she had long meditated upon Matilda; which was to astonish her by bursting upon her at once in her literary character. It was one which she had acquired with some difficulty; for, not being possessed of genius, either active or passive, it had appeared at first, a hopeless attempt. A fund of vanity compensated for these deficiencies: and, being sprung from a family which had made some figure in the world of letters, and having made her entrance into life in a literary circle, she had set it down as a maxim, that a portion of the same ability her ancestors so eminently possessed, was hers, by hereditary and indefeasible right. She soon discovered, that if she could not talk, she could listen; and that many had made a reputation by listening alone. Hence when two wise gen-

tlemen were engaged in a learned dispute, or one still wiser gentleman favored the company with a solo, in the form of a dissertation, it was her custom to sit with her head inclined on one side, and her eyes raised up, in an attitude of admiring attention, that often gained her the name of a most "sensible, modest, discriminating young woman;" till, emboldened with success, she was not content with solitary adoration, but ventured to arraign all those as rebels to her literary tribunal, who, possessed of more independence, vivacity, good taste, or good sense, refused to hang their heads on one side, turn up their eyes, listen, and admire, in token of similar devotion.

Having thus gained over the elder and graver on her side, her name so far intimidated the younger fry of authors and poetasters, that she was sure of obtaining from them attention and respect; and often levied on them contributions of unpublished essays, and suppressed copies of verses, which she afterwards passed off as her own.

But with Matilda, the few common places

with which she had armed herself, as quite sufficient to silence a young lady, of whose mental acquirements, from the extreme beauty and modesty of her very youthful appearance, she had augured but unfavourably, were soon found to be worse than useless; and the failure was the more perfect, as Matilda, in whose character the absence of pretension formed the principal charm, never once, in their conversation, suspected her design.

Miss Hautenville, like an experienced general, having chosen an advantageous post, by placing herself on an Ottoman next Miss Melbourne, who was flanked on the other side by Arbella, to secure her from intruding beaux, began a disquisition equally novel and edifying, on the smoothness of Pope, and the fire of Dryden.

“ This, if not very new, (thought the innocent Matilda,) is very good, and shews at least a mind desirous of improvement.” So after correcting a few mistakes made by the learned lady, respecting translations and originals, she continued the conversation, which

soon turned upon style in general, and Miss Hautenville made haste to inform her, (as she truly might, from the most indubitable authority,) that "those who would wish to attain a pure English style, should give their nights and days to the volumes of Addison."

On Matilda modestly venturing to give an opinion in a point of criticism "my dear madam," said Miss Hautenville, "read Burke, Beattie, Blair, Johnson, Lord Kaimes, Alison, and Knight, on the principles of taste. They have said all that ever was, or ever can be, advanced upon the subject." A remark so conclusive, effectually prevented any farther debate; till, happening to observe the *Lettere d'una Peruviana* upon a table, Miss Hautenville renewed the conversation, saying, "you read Italian, Miss Melbourne, I presume."

"A little; but I have not read that book, either in Italian or French."

"Oh! then you have had a great loss!" exclaimed Miss Hautenville enthusiastically.

"Aza, mon cher Aza!"

It must be remembered, that this lady had had the prudent foresight to assure herself of Matilda's ignorance of the work, before she ventured even this slight and safe quotation; for had Miss Melbourne read enough of it to have been able to reply by a single observation, she would have found that "*Aza, mon cher Aza!*" was the extent of her companion's knowledge. For every author, whether foreign or English, Miss Hautenville had an appropriate and distinguishing epithet always ready.

Matilda, who was a passionate admirer of nature, mentioned with enthusiasm the works of St. Pierre.

"The pathetic St. Pierre," repeated Miss Hautenville, with a look of intelligence, and then turned to another subject; denominating different authors as they occurred; "the sublime Corneille, the classic Fenelon, the refined Florian;" but, beyond these general expressions of admiration, she was rather shy of giving instances in which they appeared to her most sublime, classic, or refined. Several times, during these elevated

and interesting discussions, the silent young lady, looking through her fair locks, with an expression which it was not very easy to understand, appeared as if on the point of making some observation which she as suddenly checked; and cast her eyes on the ground. She declined cards; and by the placid smile on her countenance, appeared satisfied with her unpretending situation; while to Miss Hautenville's repeated sarcasms on her taciturnity she only replied, with a modesty which appeared to Matilda a little assumed, "Oh, Madam, I do not aspire to what is beyond my reach." "Aspiring to what is beyond their reach, is not confined to those who wish to shine on literary topics;" resumed the first lady. "Whether a woman neglects her appearance, to study a science she can never attain, or a plain worthy lover, for the chance of being noticed by a man of fashion, who contemns her, she equally leaves a solid good, to grasp at a phantom which is beyond her."

The approach of Lady Torrendale, who

at this moment had risen from cards, fortunately put an end to this *sparring* kind of conversation, which had begun to be very disagreeable to Matilda. Miss Hautenville, finding this young lady far surpassed her in information and powers of expression, had suddenly changed her former contempt for her abilities, into that last resource of expiring vanity, the most excessive admiration of them. To conclude that the talent and knowledge which eclipsed her own, must be great indeed, was some consolation. We do not like our neighbour's house should out-top ours; but we cannot feel envy at the superior height of a church or palace. She expressed her admiration in the warmest terms to Lady Torrendale.

" 'Tis a little prodigy, madam," said she; "I have had the pleasure of a long conversation with her, and have found her perfectly versed in all literature, ancient and modern."

"Indeed!" cried her Ladyship, indolently stretching, "Matilda child, why did you never tell me you were versed in all literature ancient and modern?"

Miss Melbourne blushed deeply at this sudden appeal, but before she could frame a reply, Miss Hautenville had resumed.

"Never but in the delightful conversations at Lady Lyndhurst's, did I meet with such taste, such knowledge—at Lady Lyndhurst's where the brilliant Sappho, the divine Alcæus —."

"Alcæus and Sappho! I think I have heard of them," exclaimed Lady Torrendale; "who are they? I know Lady Lyndhurst patronizes them."

"Mr. Spring; or Alcæus, as he is called in that circle," resumed Miss Hautenville, "is really the most promising young Poet of his time. His Ode to a Grasshopper, under that signature, would be positively the finest thing that ever was seen; if his Ode to the Gossamer, which appeared the next month, had not as far transcended even the promises that his earlier production had given."

"Oh, Mem," interrupted Mrs. Stockwell, "you may take Miss Hautenville's word for Mr. Spring's abilities." "Set a thief to catch

a thief.' You know she is well read ; but you have no notion what a famous good hand she is herself at poetry writing. Now my Grandfather who was a judge of them sort of things—."

"My dear Mrs. Stockwell," cried Miss Hautenville, with a look which said "I will be obeyed," and, turning the discourse quickly to Miss Swanley, the literary lady continued, "What she wants in solid acquirement, she makes up in shewy talent. To hear her recite Collins's Ode, is the divinest thing. Two candles are set upon a table; a curtain draws up, and discovers the Derbyshire Sappho in the costume of a Muse: a flourish of flutes, or some other soft music, precedes the commencement of the poem, a prelude is played, there is a dead silence, and Sappho begins."

"La! now," cried Mrs. Stockwell, "I remember it was just so, when I were at the Ditchess of Albemarle's"

A second exclamation of "Dear Madam, you have no idea of what we are talking about," from the arbitrary companion, at

length effectually checked the good lady's spirit of observation; and Lady Torrendale, whose indolent curiosity was at length a little roused, deigned to observe, "I should like to hear Sappho repeat the Ode to the Passions; could not one get her from Lady Lyndhurst's?"

"Certainly, if —"

"Oh, I understand what you mean; and it is as you suspect—there has been a sort of coolness about that house you know," turning to Matilda. "Or rather, I believe, you do *not* know; but the truth is, (in a lower key) I was sorry to part with Rose-villa at that time."

"I am sure," said Miss Hautenville, "if there should be any misunderstanding between your Ladyship, and Lady Lyndhurst, I should be most happy to be the means.—"

"Not absolutely a misunderstanding," interrupted the Countess, "but since she returned to the Country, there has been some nonsense about a visit; I did not call on her, or she did not call on me, I protest I forget which; so that she may have thought something—and I confess I *do* feel a little awk-

ward. Those wise ladies are such stiff, unpleasant——I beg your pardon, Miss Hautenville, but, I assure you I do not reckon you a wise Lady," she concluded; with a most gracious nod.

Miss Hautenville, smothering, or rather postponing her resentment, recollected the consequence she would add to herself if she could forward the plan she had at first hinted, and returned the obliging compliment by a curtesy; while the two ladies looked at each other, with an expression of countenance which seemed to say, they fully appreciated the value of the polite offers, that could on either side be made.

"I invest you, my dear Miss Hautenville," said the Countess, gaily resuming the discourse, "with full and unlimited powers to treat on that important subject: and, when it is finally adjusted, we will have Lady Lyndhurst, and her two charming little cygnets, and all the other clever people we can collect. Miss Mountain is coming down to spend some time with me, and she delights

in such parties. A conversazione is positively the very thing I want to waken me, for I am literally fatigued to death, (she concluded, looking round on the company) with every thing in the way of amusement, I have yet tried. Lord Torrendale; would you not be delighted with a conversazione?"

"You know my opinion, Lady Torrendale, of those sort of parties."

The lively Countess flirted her fan at him, but was obliged to be content with this oracular answer.

"When we meet, we will begin, if you please, Madam," said Miss Hautenville (affecting already to regulate the order of the evening's amusements) "with Miss Swanley's charming recitation: and then, (pretending modestly to hesitate) there is a little Treatise I have attempted on the revival of the Italian Drama, which I shall submit to your Ladyship's inspection. Have you not read it, Miss Ferrars? (formally addressing Arbella.)"

"*Et vous Madame?*" demanded the young lady; wittily adapting to this literary

pretender, the well known answer of Piron, to the French Prelate, on his asking the poet a similar question, respecting one of his own Pastoral Letters.

The aptness and suddenness of the retort, by which Miss Ferrars only revenged herself for the repeated and cruel sarcasms she had endured in silence through the evening, struck every one with surprise. The perfect reserve she had till this moment kept up, set off to still greater advantage, this sudden sally, and Arbella after several hours of apparent mortification, took leave with triumph and applause.

Lady Torrendale, after indulging in a hearty laugh, (her usual custom at the conclusion of a visit from the Stockwells) began rallying Matilda on the failure of her projected conquest. "What think you of Sam Stockwell, Cherub? the bachelor would not bite, hey? (as an old quizzical acquaintance of mine used to say) Well, you must stay till Spencer and Strathallan return, they are men more in your style, particularly Spencer; but," continued her Ladyship, without allow-

ing time for an answer, "will not this literary party be delightful? And I shall have such pride in producing my little Matilda, who I am sure will as far surpass odious Lady Lyndhurst's fantastic Sappho, as she does poor, stiff, tiresome Miss Hautenville."

To Matilda, who felt too easy in the possession, and too happy in the use of knowledge, to think of taking to herself any more merit from it, than from the enjoyment of health, spirits, or any other advantage of nature or fortune; the idea, that her acquisitions were intended to serve the purposes of vanity and display, and, in short, the whole system of "producing" was perfectly new. She was, however, obliged to this lately adopted whim, which was the only thing that prevented her noble friend from resenting her involuntary treachery, in not having discovered to her that she was "a wise lady," before.

"How I long for Miss Mountain!" resumed the Countess, "and, flattered with the idea of being a literary patroness, anticipated the glories of her Derbyshire night's

entertainments, while Miss Melbourne only interrupted her to ask, who Miss Mountain was? "In the first place, she is my daughter-in-law, that shall be. In the next, did you ever see Mr. H——'s statues with coloured eyes? no—*Tant pis pour vous, Mademoiselle*; for if you had, you would have only to imagine one of those, of colossal dimensions, and Miss Mountain stands before you. But," continued her Ladyship laughing, "you do not tell me what you think of Mrs. Stockwell; she improves vastly upon acquaintance, does she not? Poor dear old soul, she is one example among a thousand, of the misery to which people expose themselves, who insist upon having every thing in a style above their pretensions. She is not only tormented with a fine companion, but has been successively plagued with fine governesses, fine masters, and fine servants. She insisted on Arbella's learning for a season, of Tramezzani, only because he taught Emily to sing. She would rather endure the greatest delays, inconveniences, or impertinences, than employ any other but the tradesmen of people of fashion,

though while they are working for Lady Amabel, or Lady Barbara, her own dress cap or her niece's ball shoes must be the sacrifice. She has a fine housekeeper at double the usual salary, who possesses no visible superiority, but that of having lived at the Duchess of Albemarle's, of whose four tables, and superb establishment, she takes care to remind poor Mrs. Stockwell once a day at least; and she keeps two ladies' maids for herself and Arbella, delicate sickly girls, who must not be annoyed with ringing the bell; and who seem engaged, less for the purpose of attending their respective mistresses, than for that of extolling, on every occasion, the superior elegance, taste, and fashion of their late ones, Lady Sophia, and Lady Anne. Then, is it not entertaining to see the good lady propose herself as a model to her niece, and at any active feat or lively sally of Arbella's, which it is impossible she should imitate, reproachfully exclaim, fie Niece! Did you ever see me do that? But, to ask you a much more important question: what do you seriously think of Arbella?"

"I think nothing," said Matilda, turning on the Countess her intelligent eyes, "or rather, I know not what to think."

"Well, she is a charming girl, and shall come again very soon to visit you."

"As your Ladyship pleases; but since you honored me so far as to ask my opinion, I confess I should be nearly as much entertained by a visit from the silent woman."

"I thought she would strike you so; but Arbella Ferrars can talk upon occasion; and — good night, I'll leave you to find her out."

"To find her out," this was a phrase on which Matilda meditated as of dubious import. It long haunted her waking imagination; and, when she slept, her fancy still dwelt upon the dark-glancing eye, of the interesting, the singular Arbella.

CHAP. VIII.

Many books

(Wise men have said,) are wearisome ; who reads
Incessantly, and to his reading brings
Not spirit and judgment, equal or superior,
Uncertain and unsettled still remains :
Deep versed in books, and shallow in himself ;
Crude or intoxicate, collecting toys
And trifles, for choice matter.

THE arrival of the great Miss Mountain at Woodlands, enabled Matilda to convince herself, by actual observation, that the Countess had not exaggerated in the description she had given of her. Indeed, with Miss Mountain, the use of that figure in rhetoric was almost impossible. She was, herself, the very personification of Hyperbole. Her

features, form, and mind, seemed all, from nature's hand, exaggerated. Her figure rose above the size of most men ; and her carriage was lofty ; but owed its dignity more to a certain squareness and undeviating erectness, than to the graceful easy line of real majesty. Her eyes which were large and very dark, gained much in animation, if not in fierceness, from the extreme vividness of her complexion ; a vividness that excited, in most who saw her for the first time, the suspicion—more than the suspicion, of art.

Those who were anxious to defend Miss Mountain, alleged the purple hue which exercise, or cold was sure to give, as a proof that it was natural ; but she had many enemies among the fair ; and they used often to give a more satisfactory solution of the difficulty. “ There are so many different sorts of rouge,” Miss Langrish observed with a lisp. “ It is a pity some one does not tell poor Miss Mountain not always to chuse that which, in some lights, looks purple !” If Miss Mountain's person was striking, her manners

were no less remarkable. Of her it might be said, that she had the highest opinion of her own charms, without vanity; and of her rank and pretensions, without pride; for she exacted nothing—preserved always the same unruffled serenity of temper, whether allowed the first place, or not; and, so far from depreciating the merits of others, was always ready to join her tribute of admiration to the general voice. It must be observed, however, that with her own sex this condescension never led to familiarity, or friendship. On the contrary, she had something stiff and repulsive in her manner, that seemed doomed to keep them for ever at a distance; while the neighbouring beaux found all this frost melt away at their approach, when this ponderous formality was exchanged for the airy graces of coquetry, in the perplexing mazes of which the stately Sophia gambolled with all the ease and frolic sportiveness of an elephant.

To a character composed of such apparent contradictions, Matilda was some time in finding the clue. By repeated conversations

with the countess, she learnt a little more of Miss Mountain's early life. Her father, who had acquired a noble fortune as a wine-merchant in London, having determined, when rather advanced in years, to retire into the country, was looking out for an estate to buy, when he found that a property in Derbyshire, long in his family, was just going to the hammer: he became the purchaser, and shortly after allied himself to one of the most distinguished families in the county; and obtained at the same time, a young and amiable bride. Miss Bishop, the daughter of Sir Effingham and Lady Caroline Bishop, of Craig Castle; was induced to overlook the disparity of years, in consideration of the immense wealth offered to her acceptance by Mr. Mountain; but did not live long to enjoy the splendor it afforded. She died a few years after the birth of a daughter, who became by that means heiress to the whole of his immense property. Mr. Mountain was a good man, but he had his singularities. He would neither have a governess, a species of

inmate, which he always designated by the denomination of a domestic pest, nor send his dear Sophia to school where he was sure she would be tormented with masters. If ever she had a curiosity to read, he desired her to go to the library, where there were the plays of Dryden and Lee, the Romances of Sidney, and Orrery, and Scudery, and La Calprenède, which had descended, like heirlooms, from one generation to another, 'till bought up with the rest of the fixtures by her father. Among all these works, the quaint reveries of the amiable, but rather tedious Arcadian Knight, most fixed Miss Mountain's fancy. Pyrocles and Musidorus took possession of her early admiration, and the stately Pamela and beauteous Philoclea kept her thoughts in perpetual fluctuation between the opposite merits of affability and pride. These were the only two qualities she ever thought of exercising in society; that which surrounded her consisting chiefly of dependants. The age and increasing infirmities of Mr. Mountain soon called all her attention

to himself; and at three and twenty she was left an orphan, possessed of immense riches, but without either education or knowledge of the world, equal to what might be expected from her rank and fortune.

At this critical juncture, happening to meet with Miss Hautenville, the ladies were mutually pleased with each other. She appeared to Miss Mountain a paragon of learning, and the reading lady was forced to confess that, if the stately heiress had some of the defects, she had also the merits of an ancient brocade, being rather stiff, but at the same time very rich; in short they agreed to live together. Miss Hautenville enjoying all the advantages of Miss Mountain's house, carriage and servants, and administering, in return, the more subtle but nobler treasures of intellectual wealth, for which task she was as well qualified, as any of those adventurers in the newspapers, who advertise every necessary information in all the branches of belles-letters, to any lady or gentleman, whose education may have been neglected. Had it been necessary that Miss Mountain's men-

tal physician should take every thing she herself prescribed, the case might have, perhaps, been otherwise; but as it was, Poetry, History, Biography of every age and every nation, was, under Miss Hautenville's direction, successfully administered, and in an incredibly short time, to the patient; 'till being all well whipt together in her poor brain, it produced a fine froth at top. The removal of Miss Hautenville, who quitted her former friend, to live with Mrs. Stockwell, produced no interruption in her studies; they were pursued unremittingly; but this taste for reading, infused into her mind at too late a period, only gave a degree of shew and pretension to her discourse, which being destitute of any inward stock of ideas to supply it, resembled those gardens, which thoughtless childhood delights to make, of the refuse of the bouquet or green-house. Flowery indeed in appearance, but wanting the root, and consequently the nourishment, which alone could give their productions durability or value. All Miss Mountain retained of her chivalrous reading, was, an expectation of

general gallantry and deference, which, as she did not always immediately receive, she applied herself to obtain by a variety of means, that (without disturbing the general serenity she derived from a fixed conviction of her own excellence) gained her often the imputation of coquetry, while it was in fact only an ill understood pride.

Such a character could not appear to Matilda, a great addition to her usual society; but even at the moment when her pedantry and affectation excited in Miss Melbourne's bosom, the greatest disgust, fate was providing for her a more agreeable companion. She had not forgot Lady Torrendale's promise, that Arbella Ferrars should some day pay her a visit. In one of those long days which Matilda was invited to spend at Woodlands, she was surprised, as she entered her Ladyship's favorite-sitting room, to hear a female voice (which was not that of the Countess) warbling in a sweet clear strain, apparently from the fulness of a pleased and happy heart. The room opened into the garden, which was, on that side of the

house, raised to a level with the first floor, and from this it was one of Matilda's pleasures to invite the shivering robin from his shelter on the leafless spray. The notes, however, that now attracted her attention, were not those of sweet robin; and she experienced a still livelier sensation of delight, to discover, in the unknown songstress, an unexpected agreeable visitor, her new acquaintance, the dark-eyed Arbella. To an exclamation which involuntarily escaped Miss Melbourne, as to the manner of her *entrée*, "I came in at the window, my dear," Miss Ferrars said, as she turned quickly on Matilda her animated glance; then, advancing and fondly taking up her little hand, as if she would examine the separate beauty of every finger, "My sweet girl," she cried, "did you ever read David Simple?"

Before Miss Melbourne could reply to so abrupt an interrogatory, the lively visitor continued, "Because I feel myself just in his situation. I have long wandered in search of a friend, and never found one.



Will you be mine? Nay I will not ask you to engage yourself so suddenly. You would take me for a fool, which I am not, though Miss Hautenville often makes me appear so. To tell you the truth, I have vowed never to speak more than is absolutely necessary in her presence, because she takes up and misrepresents every thing I say. Other reasons kept me silent the first time I saw you; reasons which—I cannot tell you now—I may say more of them hereafter. But my eyes were not idle, and I remarked in your countenance a something softly winning; a something which seemed to say, “Come vain perturbed soul, come calm thy restless flutters in this placid, yet feeling breast.” Did I guess right?

Matilda, who had been as much charmed by the animated graces of Arbella, as that young lady had been by her softer captivation, accepted her proffered friendship with a cordiality, of the force of which, she was herself scarcely sensible; and Miss Ferrars, gaily looking round her as she pressed her hand, exclaimed, while a tear of sensibility dashed the

rising smile of joy, "let this dear favoured region be ever sacred, where I have given and received the pledge of the first attachment that ever promised true happiness to my heart. You will think me strangely capricious and unceremonious," she added, alluding to the manner of her visit; "but I really wish for a little, quiet, uninterrupted chat with you, which it is impossible to have below; they are always so busy, or so dull. What would Spencer say if he saw the multitude his mother receives! Well we shall soon have Eyes I hope, and that will make us gay again."

"You will soon have Eyes!"

"I perceive you are still unacquainted with our 'gipsy jargon.' There is one for Lady Torrendale's *boudoir* as well as for lower places; and there, that gentle youth is always denominated 'Eyes,' who, to vulgar mortals is commonly known by the appellation of Spencer Fitzroy." There is a certain retarded accent, a lowered tone of voice, by which the magical name of the favored swain, whom a lady regards with peculiar

interest, may be known from every other, in the Red-book, Directory, or Army List; and it was with this soft hesitation, this unwilling pleasure, that seemed to chide its own indulgence; a sigh, almost imperceptible, dividing the christian from the surname, that the words "Spencer Fitzroy," were now pronounced by Arbella.

"I know who you mean now," said Matilda, "he is—

"In the Dragoons, the Light Dragoons I believe," replied Miss Ferrars, anticipating her question.

"I need not ask that of a lady's favorite in these days," resumed Miss Melbourne, smiling archly. "Favorite! Spencer is no favorite I assure you. Quite the reverse. But to speak impartially, and you know that is the only way to judge; he is really the most elegant young man we have, at this moment. To all his mother's beauty, he joins that playful wit, that enchanting gaiety, which, when tempered by good breeding, is so irresistible; and the whole is set off by that noble and graceful address, *cet air distingué*—In short,

Spencer Fitzroy is a man whom it is impossible for a stranger to look at without demanding 'who is that?' Now do you comprehend? do you see him?"

"Perfectly." But still you have not told me why you call him 'Eyes.'

"Oh! that I leave you to find out."

"To find it out," Matilda murmured, this seems to be the watch-word at Woodlands.

Their conversation was at this moment interrupted by the entrance of Lady Torrendale's woman, who, all "blushes and blooms," advanced to them, quite out of breath, with "Young Ladies, Madam, Miss Ferrars, my Lady bids me say you have been closetted together, chattering long enough; and it's a shame, and a mop-molly, (those are the Countess's very words) to keep Miss Melbourne up stairs any longer, when there's so much company below; and Captain Fitzroy, and Captain Lionhart arrived."

"Captain Fitzroy!" exclaimed Arbella in a tremulous tone, while the colour with which Merriton's cheeks were overspread, seemed

by some magic transferred to her own. Grasping Matilda's hand with a little more violence than friendship required, she whispered, "hold me, or my head will grow giddy; these old stairs are so very steep," and the two young ladies descended together.

CHAP. IX.

——— A me lo scuopre
 Il girar de' suoi sguardi
 Lenti e pietosi—placidi al moto
 Il soave parlar.

METASTASIO.

MATILDA and her friend found a numerous circle, assembled round Lady Torrendale, among whom it was easy to distinguish Fitzroy, and his friend Captain Lionhart; a gentleman who appeared already known to the Countess, and whom her son mentioned as having kindly postponed for a few days, the object of his journey (which was to see some friends in Wales) that he might have the pleasure of paying his compliments to her. Captain Fitzroy, after having bowed slightly to Miss Ferrars, seemed

anxious to approach Matilda, and the manner that accompanied the first words he addressed to her, which were indeed of the most flattering kind, put an end to the surprise she had expressed respecting the denomination he had received in their society; but, whether it arose from blindness, obstinacy, female contradiction, or the obscuring effects of fatigue, and a rather neglected travelling dress, she could discern but little of that family beauty with which Arbella's partiality had so liberally endowed him.

Captain Fitzroy appeared to her a pale, genteel-looking young man, with a person and address which could certainly boast an air of fashion; but whose countenance, which bespoke the languor of evident and recent ill-health, was no otherwise particularly interesting. Arbella, on her part, (though at no loss to divine the cause,) felt mortified at being treated with such marked and haughty coldness in the presence of her friend, by one in whose praise she had recently and in such lively terms indulged. A secret consciousness, hardly confessed to herself, that he did

not, at least at that moment, quite answer the flattering picture she had drawn, mingled with her embarrassment; and she silently wished she could have retracted a few of the encomiums she had so lavishly bestowed.

“ He never looked so ill as he does to-day,” she whispered Matilda, as she glanced at Spencer an anxious look of fretful fondness and partiality; a partiality which she felt it was necessary others should experience, before they could view him in the light she desired. “ He has not been the same since his wound at Vimiera; but to-day he looks remarkably ill. I wish he’d talk; then you would forget every thing but his voice and manner. If he would but begin and “ *deploy* ” as the military say. I wish he’d talk.” Wishes were vain.

Captain Fitzroy, silent, languid, and apparently exhausted with his journey, continued, after his first animated address to Matilda, completely cruel and deaf to the murmured reproaches and expectations of the fair. To the questions that were poured around him, he replied only in monosyllables,

till Mrs. Stockwell, having appeared very desirous to know how he liked his last quarters, which were near a considerable town at no very great distance from London, he condescended to reply a little more at length; and assured her, in general terms, that he had found every thing very agreeable. Miss Melbourne, was amused at the distinction with which he thus honored this lady; and could not help observing, at the same time, that something between a smile and a sneer disturbed the elegant regularity of his features, as he pronounced this faint and forced eulogium. "Never was in such a confounded place in my life," cried Lionhart, who thought it necessary to dilate a little upon his friend's reply. As for the country gentlemen, they kept so close in their "*Quinta's*," or whatever they call their lumbering old-fashioned-looking houses, that we saw nothing of them; except when they came across us to deprive us, if possible, of our poor little amusement of shooting."

"Really that was very wrong; particu-

larly to you and your friends, Captain Lionhart, who had so bravely exposed your lives a shooting of the Frenchmen abroad," observed Mrs. Stockwell, attempting to say something obliging; "I am sure it was but fair in return you should have liberty to shoot the birds if you liked it at home; wasn't it now?"

"Oh! Madam, that is nothing to the purpose," cried Lionhart, hastily interrupting her, "I was only giving an instance of their unsociable disobliging temper. There was one fellow—he was not a gentleman, but a yeoman, or great farmer, or something of that kind, whom we took particular delight in mortifying, because he was so sulky; and I'll tell you how we managed it. He had a great deal of land on which he never would let any one kill a bird, though they might ask him ever so civilly. I said I'd get a day's sporting out of him. So I never let out about having heard of this little particularity of his, but one morning took my dog and gun, and presented myself in one of his fields; met my farmer—he asked.

me what business I had there? I said none, if he chose to warn me off; I'd take leave, and only ask permission to call him a very unsociable fellow: he muttered civilly enough, that as I had come there a stranger, I might take my diversion for that day on his grounds. I gave him the produce of my day's sport to shew him the amusement was all I wanted; and left my honest friend, I believe, very well content to have got rid of me with so little trouble.

"The next day that elegant gentleman who won't speak for himself, (designating Spencer) appeared on the ground. He had his cart with him, so he brought up his dogs in the finest style imaginable, and quite fresh; had his shooting jacket on too; no one could know him to be of the same regiment, or of any regiment at all. Honest Diggory warns him off. "God bless my soul, sir, I beg your pardon! I was certainly informed that shooting was allowed here; but since it was otherwise, of course I shall make my bow and retire." He did so; but not till he had induced the old dog to

give him some sport for that day at least. On the next, another of our lads tried his fortune. My gentleman farmer thought the deuce was in the strangers, that none of them knew of his determination. The following morning, a fourth presented himself. All of the same regiment, and so on; through the whole season, there never passed a day that he had not some one or other of our fellows on his grounds; and yet we kept within the letter of the law; for no one returned, after being duly warned against trespass."

"Oh, you wicked creeters!" lisped Miss Langrish; "how is it possible to defend oneself against your contrivances!"

"So much for the neighbourhood," resumed Lionhart, who had told this story with great vivacity of action; then, as for the town itself—not a family, not a house, where you could get a lounge, or a feed in the whole place; never saw such a cursed crew."

"Hush, hush, Lionhart," said the elegant Spencer, mildly, "when you are offended, you are always violent; you exceed—

indeed you do ; for my part, I did not find it so very unpleasant ; my mornings were always sufficiently filled up with engagements ; and I am sure, on the part of the ladies, at least, we had no reason to complain of particular shyness. You could not go into a shop without meeting several who—" " Oh, yes, deuce take them, they were obliged to venture there, to purchase their riff-ruffs, frill-fralls, laces, and—"

" Not always to purchase," resumed Spencer, calmly.

" The little Welchman seems choleric," whispered Arbella, laughing.

" You were always the defender of the ladies," cried Lionhart, once more addressing his friend ; " but you will allow me to say, that the principal men there, were a pack of the strangest animals that were ever assembled together since the creation of colours. The first families consisted of a heterogeneous collection, (continued the captain more slowly, as if proud of bringing out so long a word) of retired drysalters, tobac-

conists, pin-makers, buckle-makers, ginger-bread-bakers, slop-sellers, fish-mongers, tallow-chandlers, coal-heavers, green-grocers, tailors, and travelling tinkers."

The company laughed at the climax; and Fitzroy, who never did more than discover his beautiful pearly teeth in a graceful smile, interrupted him with—"Surely my dear Lionhart, you are severe, you exaggerate—they were not quite so bad."

"But they were," resumed his friend, who seemed determined to prove what he had asserted.

"You will not deny, I suppose, that the assemblies, as they called them, (though they were more properly '*Assemblages*' of queer beings), were not quite the thing. Do you remember the young lady you danced with?"

Here Fitzroy interposed to "beg," with an air of authority, "that they might have no more parish business;" but Lionhart, who was not to be so put off, continued

"She was a pretty girl faith; and he flirted with her, and was quite 'attached' to

her for the evening; 'till, at last, upon his offering to get her some lemonade, or wine and water, she answered, 'No, I thank ye sir; but I should feel quite "comfortable" if you would get me a posset of sugared ale.' If you could have seen the start my gentleman gave!"

"I confess," said the Captain, "I had once the honor of assisting at a ball where the ladies did not appear perfectly aware of the little etiquettes that—

"How mildly he pronounces sentence on the 'ladies.' Dear creatures! there is not one of them will ever want an advocate, or a lover either, while the 'gentle Spencer' is in existence."

At length, Captain Fitzroy succeeded in what he wished, which was, to turn the conversation to more general topics. The desire of pleasing, by degrees gave animation to his manner, at first so languid; and lit up a countenance, not deficient, either in variety or expression; even Matilda, at first so difficult, was obliged to allow him the correct and regular profile of the beautiful Lady

Torrendale, to whom he bore a resemblance, the most striking that could exist in a person of a different age and sex ; and the advantage of features was farther set off by the eloquence of eyes, which, if not absolutely fine, were at least of that sort, which seem so perfectly satisfied of their own power, that others, concluding there must be some foundation for such a confidence, give them the credit of being so. To every female he had something agreeable and flattering to say ; but she was particularly struck by the attention and deference with which he distinguished Mrs. Stockwell.

“ Then his crest fell, and all his pride was gone ;
He drooped the conquered wing.”

That his manner, even to this lady, should be expressive of peculiar respect and interest, was, however, in Spencer Fitzroy, nothing very remarkable. It always changed, whenever a woman was to be addressed. Whether young, handsome, fashionable, it mattered not. An altered and more tender tone of voice ; a look, soft, engaging, that insinu-

ated itself into the soul, bespoke at once his ascendancy over, and his submission to, that sex, which it was his pleasure to please, but his glory to subdue.

Lady Torrendale had only seen her beloved son for a few days after his return from the Peninsula; for he had been ordered almost immediately to Cheltenham, to recover from his wounds; whence he had joined his regiment, then quartered in the vicinity of the Metropolis; she was, therefore, not sparing of her enquiries, either to him, or his soldier friend respecting their adventures abroad; but, from him, she could draw only very brief replies, and from Lionhart, who had served with distinction from the age of sixteen, in most parts of the globe, absolutely nothing. Yet even the slight sketch that Spencer gave of the hardships and sufferings to which the army was exposed abroad, so far worked upon her Ladyship's tender feelings, as to give rise to an idea which superseded for the present the interest she had been beginning to take in literature and literary parties. To make up articles of warm

clothing to defend our troops from the rigours of the season, would be not only very meritorious, but very fashionable. The beautiful Duchess of D—— had been once much admired for being the first mover of such a plan. Why should not the Countess of Torrendale? Many of the men of the regiment in which Strathallan served, were the sons of the neighbouring tenants and peasantry, who had enlisted out of preference in that to which he belonged; how charming, how sentimental, for the fine ladies at home to think of administering to the wants and comforts of their defenders! While these thoughts rapidly crossed her mind, the probability that the subjects of her solicitude might return before she had time to put them into effect, suddenly occurred to damp the rising glow of benevolence. No matter, it would then do for Spencer's regiment, or for Strathallan's; still winter was always hard to be endured; or perhaps affairs might change; they might stay, and then what she prepared for them might be forwarded "somehow," her Ladyship's favorite method of doing every thing.

This was about the time the English army under Sir John Moore was on the retreat towards Corunna.

Lord Torrendale, who hailed with pleasure every thing that bore the semblance of benevolence in his wife, seconded the idea with more warmth than he commonly showed; while Lady Torrendale, as usual, undecided, applauded and dissented from her own proposal twenty times in a minute: "Poor Strathallan! how this will gratify him!—this will be quite in his way. Poor fellow!—he may not be there to receive them! Good heavens! we may have a battle from one day to another—isn't it shocking—that is a very pretty chain you have got, Arbella; is it from London?—we certainly may."

Lord Torrendale looked as if something was rising to his lips, but said nothing.

At supper, her Ladyship laughed, and talked, and ate, and surmised, and wept whenever the idea of Strathallan (recalled more forcibly to her mind by the presence of her military visitors) returned; and then re-

sumed her conversation with Captain Lionhart—ate, and talked, and wept again.

Lord Torrendale made no complaint, spoke little, ate nothing, and retired early. At length, the animated discourse the countess had held with her guests, degenerated into a long conversation, aside, with Spencer; in which (if a judgment might be formed from the glow that sometimes stole across his pallid cheek, and the suppressed eagerness of his agitated whisper) both were considerably interested. The name of "Strathallan" frequently occurred; and Fitzroy once, while a heightened colour for a moment crimsoned his features, repeated, "No, that is a circumstance which I never even allow myself to imagine."

Except when thus engaged with his mother, his attentions, during the evening, were pretty equally divided between Miss Melbourne and Miss Mountain; and the former, who felt how small her claim was to such a distinction, and remembered her late conversation with the countess, concluded, by the

whole of his behaviour to the "SUPERB" Sophia, and by the manner in which that behaviour was encouraged, that he was, without doubt, the happy man, on whose account, she was saluted by Lady Torrendale, daughter-in-law "that shall be."

CHAP. X.

D'Amori un nido

Stranamente secondo

D'Irene è il core. Un s'incomincia appena

Su l'ali a sostener; l'altro s'affretta

Già dal guscio a spuntar——

• • • • •

Ve n'ha d'ogni colore, un le viole.

Par che spieghi nei vanni; un altro i gigli

Ve n'ha bruni e vermigli.

METASTASIO. IL NIDO DEGLI AMORI.

—

NOTHING appeared more clear to Matilda, than the indifference of Captain Fitzroy to Miss Ferrars. The lively yet tender Arbella felt equally persuaded, that the clearing up a recent and slight misunderstanding, was all that was necessary to restore the amiable Spencer to her chains. Of this misunderstanding, as ridiculous in its cause as

serious in its effects, she soon related the history to Matilda.

“ I have a very unfortunate habit,” she said, “ of suddenly saying whatever arises in my mind, without always considering the circumstances or situation of the persons present, which may sometimes make it awkward ; for which reason, when I want to appear particularly discreet, I have no other resource than condemning myself to absolute silence, as I did in our first visit to Woodlands, before Miss Hautenville. Now one day, at Cheltenham, talking of some of the military in the neighbourhood we had left, I happened to observe, in a mixed company, of which Spencer was one, that in a country town, one might always guess the approaching departure of a regiment, by the wailings of the damsels, and the bustle among the taylor's. At the moment, he did not appear to hear what was said ; but, during the rest of our stay at Cheltenham, he never forgave me.”

Astonished at the frank and unasked acknowledgment of indiscretion and flippancy

so gross, in one whom she had accustomed herself to look upon as a model of elegant reserve, Matilda, whose own words and actions were ever bound "in the silken fetters of decorum," remained uneasy and uncertain what to reply, while her lively friend continued—"This is not the only distress into which my unlucky 'readiness at remark' has brought me; do you know, the whole of Miss Hautenville's envenomed hatred to me arises from as trifling a cause. A gentleman was one day complimenting her upon her literary talents, which, God knows—however, we must allow every one to have his taste—let it suffice, he *was* complimenting her. 'Yes,' she replied, drawing up her scraggy neck, and mincing in her odious affected tone of voice, 'if I have any merit, I flatter myself it consists in the power of distinguishing and appreciating works of real genius; as for the rest—'

" 'Tis all but leather and prunello,'

I interrupted,—irresistibly impelled to the quotation of Pope's well known line, by the

aptness of allusion it afforded to the yellow leathern case that enwraps the bag of bones, she has the effrontery to call a person. Another time I affronted her terribly by happening to compare her poor thin arm, in the middle of a long, clear, muslin sleeve, to the worm sometimes blown in glasses: but the greatest storm was when I called her a Book-binder."

"And why did you call her a Book-binder?"

"Why, you must know, she has a very impertinent way of lording it over my poor aunt, and ridiculing her for foibles that at least *she* has no right to take notice of: so one day, she was going on in this strain, and terming my aunt's attachment to Lady Torrendale 'Quality-binding,'—I took fire—'And pray, Miss Hautenville,' said I, 'what do you term your own literary mania—your devoted admiration of every thing in the shape of a poet or poetaster? that, to adopt your own phraseology, might be styled 'Book-binding.' It is really ridiculous to see her, when in company either with some

of her clever people, or with her Kite, Miss Mountain."

" Her Kite!"

" Yes: have you never observed some women, possessed of neither merit, beauty, or fortune, attach themselves to another, distinguished by one of those requisites; and, rising with her, like the bits of paper fastened to the tail of a kite, derive a degree of fancied consequence by exaggerating the importance of their principal, to the undue depression of every one else? Now, Miss Hautenville acquired that habit when she lived with Miss Mountain, and continues it whenever they meet; and I take care to notice it to her."

" But these are all heinous offences. How can you wonder she sometimes retorts?"

" Ah, but the difference is, that any little pleasantry of mine, is but the scratch of a kitten, which, even if it does hurt, is meant only in play; while Miss Hautenville's malice, like the sting of a serpent, is always intended to produce a deep and envenomed wound."

" And why do you, my poor little kitten,

venture to play with a serpent that may wound you so fatally? You see, a similar heedlessness had nearly lost you the good opinion of Captain Fitzroy."

"Then you allow that Fitzroy's opinion is something?" interrupted the volatile Arbella.

"I always said you would like him, though I was sorry to observe he did not immediately make a very favourable impression."

"On the contrary, from the first I thought him agreeable."

"There you are wrong again, my dear. He ranks above the Agreeables, and below the Adorables, such as his brother Strathallan,—he is Interesting."

"You seem to have a perfect scale for your beaux."

"Exactly so. I separate them into the four great divisions, or classes, of Adorables, Admirables, Interesting, and Agreeables; to which Insupportables may, if you please, be added as a fifth. These you may again subdivide into the Wits, Bearables, Insufferables——But I must take another time to explain to you my system at length; at pre-

sent an example or two will suffice. I have instanced an Adorable: the Admirable is one, who, possessed of a vast deal of mere personal beauty, thinks he has nothing to do but to shew himself to be 'admired,'—whence the name; while your elegant, languid, fashionable-looking man, like Spencer, with expressive eyes, and an honourable wound or two, received at Vimiera or Roleça, has a fair claim to the Interesting. Nothing can be more opposite than the Elegant and Admirable. The Elegant, at a public place, takes care never to drive out without a fair or titled companion; is never seen walking, except attending, at a late hour, on some fashionable and distinguished group; and, though really engrossed with himself, always endeavours to make them believe that *they* are the principal objects of his homage. The haughty Admirable, on the contrary, likes as well to be alone; and if he *does* meet you, stares you in the face with his fine eyes, on the first *rencontre*, as who should say, 'What the deuce do I care for your beauty! I think myself as well

worth looking at as you!' Lastly, the Wit, or Agreeable, is one who, perceiving that nature has denied him all pretensions to set up for an Adorable, an Admirable, or even an Interesting, quietly gives up the plan of setting hearts palpitating and eyes sparkling, and wisely contents himself with laughing at all three; while by constantly telling good stories, and saying smart things (or things meant to be smart), he gets the reputation of 'a vastly clever young man,' and 'the pleasantest creature in the world.' You must observe, that the ugly Wit is the natural enemy of the stupid Admirable. *Comprenez vous?* And now, will you deny the title that 'Eyes' has obtained to the rank of 'Engaging, Fascinating,'——Heavens! that such creatures, that such 'Detestables' as my cousin Stockwell should be suffered to walk upon two legs, and call themselves of the same species as Spencer Fitzroy!"

"To be sure, it is very impertinent."

"I offended him grievously on one occasion, that he came up to me just going to a ball, all drest in his best, by telling him,

Spencer looked a thousand times better in his shooting jacket."

" You must have intended to offend him. My dear Arbella, were I as fond of quotation as you are, how often should I be tempted to say to you, in the warning words of Sterne, ' Trust me, this unwary pleasantry of thine—' "

" Oh yes, that has been already often said to me; but—"

" You wish, at all events, to dismiss Mr: Stockwell?"

" No, no, not absolutely dismiss him; he is very well as he is—I would not inflict unnecessary pain; as my aunt says, when Spencer torments Floss, ' It is not right to make the poor dumb creeter suffer.' If I ever do so, to tell you the truth, it is to revenge on him what the more agreeable creature sometimes makes me endure."

" And why do you endure it?"

" Why! Ah, Matilda! have you yet to learn that those very manners, which in an ugly disagreeable wretch excite our scorn and aversion, in a more amiable person, if they

do not absolutely destroy, only increase our partiality? I never see Spencer Fitzroy and Sam Stockwell together, without applying to them poor Phoebe's expression in Shakespeare, 'I'd rather hear you chide than this man woo.' "

"Well, it may be so; but I own I could not discover in Captain Fitzroy's conversation any of that superiority—marked mental superiority, that could justify—"

"Why, I do not say you could quite make a Spenceriana from attending to him," interrupted Arbella, rather piqued at her friend's slowness in approving her choice; "yet still there is a way, there is a manner, which is every thing. If Stockwell gave himself airs indeed, 'twould be different. '*La fatuité ne convient qu'à la jeunesse militaire*;' that golden axiom of Marmontel's explains my meaning better than—"

"Ah! '*La jeunesse militaire*!' nothing else can hope to succeed, where one of that body has made so deep an impression."

"Deep! no, no, not so far gone as that,

neither. He knows I make myself very easy about him."

"Then, if that be really the case, I wonder you, who study so much to please, ever run the risk of losing any other conquest by the flippancies you have mentioned to me."

"And who told you those flippancies *never* pleased? As I said before, manner is every thing: that is one of our little secrets; you must allow coquetry to have its free-masonry."

"I do, indeed; and acknowledge you Grand Lady of the order if you please; for I do not understand a system so complicated."

"You shall understand it another time," resumed Arbella gaily: "I am a good witch, and engage to put you in possession of all my knowledge; but at present weightier business calls. I see Lady Torrendale already armed with her scissars and fleece, preparing the charitable work, and chiding our dull delay; let us not wait her call—away, away, away!"

With these words, Arbella hastened to join the Countess; and Matilda, stunned with the torrent of eloquence she had heard, resolved to be more careful in future, before she gave any lady the title of the "Silent Woman."

CHAP. XI.

Non eres palma
Eres retaina
Eres cypres
De triste rama
Eres desdicha
Desdicha mala.
Do esta tu escudo ?
Do esta tu lanza ?
Todo do acaba
La mala adanza.

SPANISH SONG OF PERAZA.

AND now we must behold the Countess presiding over a different scene, interesting at least from its novelty ; and, while she sat at the head of a large table covered over with flannels and other materials for her benevolent work, apportioning out to each of the blooming damsels that surrounded her, their share in advancing its progress. Every

morning her ladyship was encircled by a little levee, united by the hopes and fears that they felt in common; and who discoursed on little else than the interesting events that from day to day might be expected to take place. Strathallan, the centre of every one's solicitude, was the theme of every tongue. His safe return was the constant subject of the audible wish, or the low-breathed prayer; and every circumstance of his character, disposition, and former life, perpetually discussed by those who, knowing him best, could best appreciate his value, rendered his image so familiar to Matilda, that she could hardly still believe it was that of one unknown to her. She went easily along with the detail given of his former merits, and the praises he had received; and, when contrasting them with the perils to which he might that moment be exposed, her cheek often became blanched with terror, and her respiration suspended, while

" Her fancy followed him through foaming waves
To distant shores; and she would sit and weep
At what a ' SOLDIER' suffers."

"You must get on with that work in 'double quick time,' Countess," (said young Lionhart to Lady Torrendale, who, possessing more vanity than pride, encouraged the familiarity;) "that is to say, if you mean it to be of use to our brave fellows this winter."

Spencer then gave his opinion. Miss Mountain said something about Hercules wielding the distaff of Omphale: but in the mean time the work proceeded rapidly.

It was not to be supposed, however, that Matilda could be often of these parties. Sowerby, who affected to treat the whole plan as a whim that would never last till its object could be put into execution, alternately laughed, and railed, and seriously reproved her for joining in it.

"I wonder, Mr. Sowerby," said Mrs. Melbourne, "that you can disapprove of an undertaking which has humanity for its basis. For my part, I feel so interested in the poor victims of war—"

"Curse 'em, why do they make war? The victims of war are the encouragers of it too;

and, in the eyes of a philosophical observer, are the least deserving of compassion."

"Nay, my dear Sir, I did not expect to hear from you such a 'tirade' against war. I am sure there was one in which you would have served with distinction."

"What was that pray?"

"*La guerre de la Fronde*, in France; for such a complete *frondeur* of every thing, whether innocent, laudable, or blameable, I never had the pleasure of meeting with before."

"Oh, Madam! once you refer me to the French, I have only to make my bow, and wish you a good morning."

"I am happy by any means to have induced the philosophical Mr. Sowerby to make a bow."

To relieve the tediousness of the long winter evenings at Woodlands, it was the custom of the great Miss Mountain, who, since she had put herself under the tuition of Miss Hautenville, had "crept into favor with herself," as a literary genius, to amuse the company with some book of entertainment, which

she read aloud. In point of declamation she would not have yielded up her claim, even to the famous Miss Swanley ; but, in the thrilling, the soul-harrowing style of poetry she thought she excelled the most.

“ They drink out of skulls newly torn from the grave,
“ Their liquor is blood ; and this horrible stave
“ They howl, to the health of Alonzo the brave,
“ And his consort the fair Imogine—”

This she was repeating one night, in a cadence which the bell-man might have envied, and with an “unction” to which the muscular strength and size of her tall, bony form, thrown partly into the shadow by the manner in which the lights fell, and the horror that was expressed in her red rolling eye, imparted additional effect ; when, a faint shriek, from one corner of the room, arrested the attention ; and it was found that poor little Miss Langrish, who had sat an almost unobserved listener, had dropt her work, and, overcome by the force of the description, was near sinking under the violence of her emotion. This new weakness, in the chosen

preceptress of Emily, was a delightful discovery to Miss Mountain; who, under pretence of teaching her to conquer it, made her, from that time, constantly endure all the imaginary, but dreadful sufferings, it produces, while she herself, when she had accomplished her purpose, would look down upon the poor girl, with her accustomed smile of conscious superiority, and kindly taking her trembling hand, ask her what was the matter; then, looking round her, complacently appeal to the company if she had done any thing but what was the general desire? As soon as the candles were lit, and the work, on which every one was now employed, was begun, Lenora, Donica, the Grim White Woman, the Little Grey Man, the second book of the Last Minstrel, the Eve of St. John, the Haunted Beach, selections from Otranto, Udolpho, Montorio, whatever was calculated to inspire, on the timid or imaginative, the deep, nameless feeling of terror, unfounded, undefined, always formed a part of the evening's entertainments. When most of the family were withdrawn, and

the ladies had assembled in conversation around the fire. It was the custom of the Countess, who thought this "*mystification*" of poor Miss Langrish a delicious amusement, to continue it, by vying with Miss Mountain in recalling all the horrible stories, with which her memory could supply her from her youth; while the latter, though at other times she hated to talk to Lady Torrendale, seconded her admirably, with tales, for which the vastness and solitary situation of Vinesbury (an old mansion in the family, though re-purchased by her father) furnished ample materials. A few hints, respecting the antiquity of the manor-house at Woodlands, and the reports that several of the rooms were haunted, particularly that one in which Miss Langrish slept, generally closed the kindly-meant dialogue; and the poor governess was not dismissed to her chamber, till her pale countenance and shivering limbs announced her unwillingness and almost inability to leave the scene, where, at least, if she encountered mortification, she had the advantage of light, noise, and society.

One night Matilda met her passing the

long dark corridor, which she was obliged to cross to reach her apartment.

"For God's sake, Miss Melbourne," said she, seizing her hand with a firmness which seemed to request, and almost demand support; "have the goodness to accompany me, if it is only for a few moments, to my room. Lady Torrendale and Miss Mountain have been telling ghost stories 'till I am ready to sink and faint away with terror: and do you know, these dismal December nights, when I lie quaking in my bed and hear the hollow moaning of the wind swinging the great oaks, or rattling the casements at this end of the old house, I fancy it into the cries and groans of the wounded, and think that every blast brings me tidings of the death of Lord Strathallan. Heavens what have I said! what might lose me my situation in this family! I have only to throw myself upon your humanity, Miss Melbourne, as I once did on a former occasion."

It was a reliance in which Miss Langrish was not mistaken. Matilda not only kindly accompanied her to her chamber, but staid

with her, till, by the amenity and soothing charm of her animated and polished conversation, she had dispelled the gloom of those terrors that hung about this unfortunate girl, and restored her mind to something of a cheerful and collected tone. When she retired to rest, after the performance of this act of charity, though she pitied the weakness of Miss Langrish, Matilda gave her credit for the possession of feeling. She much more severely blamed her persecutors; and, on the whole, did not think the young lady so absurd and unreasonable as usual.

Time passed on; and, in order to assist in finishing the grand work in which Lady Torrendale was interested, Matilda was engaged to stay for a week at Woodlands. At night, when Miss Mountain began to read, her Ladyship who always dearly loved to interrupt whatever was going forward, with an "aside" of her own, suddenly turning to Miss Melbourne, said in a low voice, "My dear creature, I know your father is an excellent Astronomer—is he not something of an Astrologer too? I wish," she continued,

obtaining no immediate reply to this incomprehensible question, "that he could draw Spencer's Horoscope. A second whisper, "a kind of presentiment I have, tells me he was born for something great." "Dear Lady Torrendale"—"Nay, nay, forget what I have said, you know I have frequent occasion to demand that indulgence from you. I am a trifling ridiculous creature," she resumed, attempting to laugh off her former remark. Then after a pause—"I wish," she cried, "that Lionhart was returned."

Lionhart, who seemed to have given up for the present, all idea of his Welch journey, and was "attached," as Spencer termed it, to the society at Woodlands, had gone, with that ready officiousness, which is so well rewarded by the smiles of a fine woman, to inquire among the families in the neighbourhood if any rumours of later date than the news the public prints afforded had reached them. At this moment he appeared, and every one crowded round him, for it was evident the intelligence he brought was of more than

usual importance. It was the report of a general engagement, said to have taken place at Corunna between our troops and the French; in which the former were victorious, but no particulars were yet known.

"Happy Strathallan!" exclaimed Spencer. "How many glorious affairs he has been in, I wish I had been with him!"

Lionhart said nothing.

"I wish I had been with him," repeated Fitzroy, with still greater vehemence, on receiving no answer.

"I am quite as well satisfied you were not," said Lady Torrendale, looking at him, with a tenderness, which, in this instance, she tried rather to repress than to exaggerate.

Absorbed in his own reflections, Spencer was silent; except that he at intervals continued to exclaim "I wish I had been there; and then perhaps (he added in a lower voice) there would have been an end of it all."

"They know more in town," observed Lady Torrendale, "We may know more to-morrow—'till then—"

"That my life could ensure his," cried

Lord Torrendale, bursting suddenly from a depth of abstraction, that rendered him unconscious of the presence of those around him. "That I could once more see him, be near him, be his protection; but he has a better. God will protect and restore him to me; he will in mercy spare the excellencies of my brave, my noble son."

"Torrendale is distracted I believe," said the Countess, looking at him with a mixture of shame and resentment, (which was hardly deserved,) while her lord, apparently unconscious of having uttered any thing, had sunk into his former gloomy and agitated silence. "How like a methodist parson he spoke," she continued.

"He spoke like a father," thought the innocent and sympathizing Matilda; "like one from whose character, deep, soul-felt anguish and anxiety have torn the artificial veil, by habit drawn over feelings naturally affectionate and warm."

And now the guests, with hardly power to exchange a mute and mournful good night, had each departed; and the family, gliding

like ghosts, separated to pass in impatience and anxiety, the hours till daylight should return.

The news of the following morning brought a confirmation of the evening's report; but nothing yet, either to justify or dispel the agonizing apprehensions of the suffering friends of Strathallan. This gloomy calm was not of long duration. Their most dreadful fears were too soon fully justified; his name stood among the first of those who gallantly fell fighting on that memorable day.

Never had Matilda beheld real grief till now; that of Lord Torrendale mocked description: while the Countess, forgetting all low-thoughted jealousies and animosities, yielded to her better feelings, in a tribute, late, but sincere, to the virtues of the amiable being thus lost to them for ever. "Oh! he possessed the gentlest, noblest nature!" she exclaimed; while, weeping in the arms of Matilda, she gave way to the various and contradictory emotions that swelled, almost to bursting, her weak, but not corrupted heart. "Who will now defend me from the

effects of Torrendale's resentment? Who will interpose to obviate the imprudences of Fitzroy? You look surprised, Miss Melbourne; that man, so cold, so calm, apparently; that proud, silent Lord Torrendale, has moments of rage which nothing but the persuasions of Strathallan could appease; Strathallan, whom nothing bearing a human heart could long resist or refuse. 'Twas when Fitzroy laboured under his father's severest displeasure, that generous brother undertook and succeeded, in being his advocate."

In the course of this conversation, Matilda gathered, from the broken sentences of the Countess, that the beloved, the lost Strathallan, was the bond of union, which had alone cemented the jarring interests of a family, where such different views and dispositions prevailed; that to her he had been ever a generous and respectful friend; to Spencer, a brother the most liberal and kind; and to the little heart-struck Emily a protector, guardian, guide; the companion of her youth, the brother of her love.

" You must leave us, my sweet girl," said her Ladyship, looking through her tears, at her sympathising young friend ; " This is no house for you. It would destroy your spirits, without consoling us."

" Leave you, Lady Torrendale," exclaimed Matilda, in a voice she meant should be calm, while, as she bent over the Countess, her swimming eyes expressed the soul of pity, descended to whisper peace to the wounded heart. " No," she continued in a firm collected tone, " you may drive me from your presence, but you cannot from your house while I can be any relief to you ; and as you flattered me once that you considered my society as such. I will not leave you, at least not till you tell me it grows painful to you."

" Angel girl ! this is indeed, a kindness above your age, above my hopes," she had nearly added ;—but, fearful of wounding a mind delicate and grateful, as she had discovered Matilda's to be, the Countess contented herself with pressing her hand in token of pleased assent, to her friendly and truly welcome proposal.

CHAP. XII.

With eyes of genial fire to light the morn,
Yet soft, when kind, as evening's dewy ray :
Brows, that proclaim a soul for empire born,
And smiles, to bid the enamour'd world obey.

J.

ON the following day, Miss Melbourne found her Ladyship in no disposition to renew the conversation of the preceding evening. The composing effects of sleep, her usual morning's refreshment, and half an hour spent with Fitzroy, had so far restored her to her ordinary train of feelings and reflections, that she seemed enabled to bear her share of the loss the family had sustained, with all due philosophy ; and even inclined to retract a few of the praises that sorrow and unavailing regret had, in the first mo-

ments of surprise and anguish extorted from her. Before her young friend had left her chamber, she had consulted her as to the most becoming mourning to be procured on account of this "melancholy business," as she termed it; and Matilda found, upon the whole, that the Countess had left upon her mind; an impression of Lord Strathallan's merits, much deeper than what she at this moment herself experienced.

Their conference was interrupted by a bustle in the hall, which was plainly heard by Lady Torrendale; who, turning pale exclaimed: "for heaven's sake send these people away; and don't let Lord Torrendale see them, I am sure it is some of the tenants; they were so fond of that Strathallan." Her Ladyship was not mistaken. Several of the villagers, apprized, by general rumour, of the loss they had sustained, had assembled at the mansion, with a faint hope of hearing it contradicted; and on its mournful confirmation, filled the scene with their well-intended, but piercing expressions of sorrow. One old man in particular was deaf to all.

comfort. "He was such an angel to me and mine he said. When he went abroad, my two poor boys, as fine lads as ever handled a plough, would follow him for love; and after he had done every thing he could, to overpersuade them to stop with their poor old father, he bade me not to be cast down, he said, for that they were good lads, he said, and he would have an eye to them; and so he had; heaven bless him for it, and never wrote to his own father at Woodlands, but he sent me word how they were, and if they were doing well: and now my good old master himself will never hear from him more; but will have some one writing to him how his dear son fell." "So young to bear so kind a heart!" was repeated by several voices at once. "There was not a tenant's son but would have wished to follow him; and not one that did, but he gave them money for their friends, and wrote with his own dear hand to comfort their parents after the battles, as he did to old Robin yonder."

Matilda, while she tried to console and dismiss these simple people, found the pre-

vailing tide of regret infectious; and the servants, who felt like them, had no heart to answer or to send them away; when suddenly, the appearance of an unexpected visitor in the hall recalled them to the command of their feelings, and the remembrance of the respect they owed to those of their lord. Lady Emily Fitzroy, her countenance all marked with the traces of recent tears, but with a dignity of deportment and serenity of voice, beyond what could be expected at her early age, glided in among the mournful groupe; approaching several of the country people, who were each of them personally known to her. She kindly praised them for the interest they took in the family misfortune; but remonstrated with them for indulging it to such excess. "You do not wish to distress my father," said she, "consider, in the state in which he now is, how it might affect him were he to find you thus assembled?"

The sensibility, that imparted dignity to the still infantine graces of her form and features; the pleading earnestness of her voice and

manner, to which grief repressed, yet evident, gave added interest, had an irresistible effect on the hearts she addressed. Convinced of the impropriety of thus giving a loose to inconsiderate sorrow, they departed, not without each having received a soothing and affectionate word from Lady Emily, and invoking in return every consolation and blessing on the remaining branches of the house of Torrendale. Till they were gone, this amiable girl preserved her apparent serenity; but, when the occasion for exerting it ceased, it yielded to the prevailing feelings of nature; and, throwing herself on Matilda's bosom, she gave vent to a torrent of tears. "Oh! Miss Melbourne, my brother; and such a brother!" was all she could say; and Matilda, her heart already softened by the sorrow that prevailed around, was hardly in a state to afford her any consolation.

At the close of this mournful day, she felt herself nearly exhausted by the variety of painful scenes she had gone through. Sitting down by the light of a single taper, in the lately cheerful, but now deserted drawing-

room, her spirits sunk for a few moments, under the pressure of such repeated trials. Her tears flowed in silent, and almost involuntary abundance; and from these tears, her oppressed and feeling heart derived the first relief it for some hours had experienced. She had continued thus for some time in melancholy, and almost unconscious meditation, when a figure, scarcely discerned in the gloomy, partial light, passed by her, and she was startled, when she perceived it was Lord Torrendale. Her first idea was the fear of giving offence to grief solemn, sacred, fixed, as his; but the expression of his countenance soon made her forget her apprehension.

“Are these tears indeed for us,” he said, in a voice which she never thought capable of tenderness before. “How sweet is the expression of sympathy, even from a stranger; but to think perhaps it is only a stranger bestows it;” then, as if repenting of what he had said, and resuming all his native pride, “It is kind of you, Miss Melbourne,” he continued, “to stay with Laura at this trying

hour; her spirits cannot bear the sight of affliction, even when"—

Matilda endeavoured to speak, to express the feeling with which her heart was touched; but the effort only served completely to overcome her, and she sobbed aloud.

"Amiable creature!" cried Lord Torrendale, wholly softened, and every prejudice vanishing before the enchanting tenderness he beheld. "You are indeed worthy to weep for Strathallan! Yet do not weep for him. Like the proud father of the noble Ossory, I can truly say, my son, though dead, is dearer to my memory, than living merit could ever become to it. But one mind on earth resemblesh is. Why could I not hope for such a daughter; surely you were intended for the bride of Strathallan!"

Matilda startled; was she then wedded to the grave? Often in the hour of despondency and gloom, often, when mournful forebodings overshadowed her after-life, the words of Lord Torrendale struck with prophetic terror upon her soul.

Three days had now passed, since she had

been confined to Woodlands in the performance of her self-imposed duties ; duties in which she did not fear any controul or opposition from Mrs. Melbourne ; who, herself, bore at once " Too tender, and too firm a heart," not to witness with delight, in her daughter, that well directed sensibility, that correctness and justness of feeling, which made her seek, instead of shrinking, from the scenes where it could be exerted with advantage to those, who had a claim upon her gratitude or affection. On the afternoon previous to the day fixed for her intended departure, she had left the family, in whom an apparent degree, at least, of restored composure, seemed to have rewarded her attentions, in order to pay a last visit to some of the villagers, who had been occasionally the objects of her bounty. She could not enter a cottage where Strathallan was not the subject of discourse.

" 'Tis a sad thing, Madam," said a poor countryman, " to think we should lose our dear young Lord, and have the 'Squire Captain put over us for our master. We used

often to think how happy we should live under the one that's gone, whenever it should please God to take away our good old Lord ; not but that he is very charitable too, but then he is a stern sort of gentleman ; now Lord Strathallan was all kindness."

" He was indeed a gracious creature," said his wife ; " and when after a day's shooting, he has stopt and rested himself in our cottage, and taken such notice of the children, and asked after me when I've been bad ; well to be sure, though I loved him so much, I never could get it out of my head that I was talking and looking at a crowned king. They may say what they will of the beauty and the grandeur of your princes and your great folks, I am sure I would not walk to the end of the village to see them all assembled, in comparison of one glimpse of his lovely countenance." The poor woman could hardly refrain from weeping ; and her daughter, who had listened in silence, no longer repressed her tears.

" Lord Strathallan was very well known among you then," said Matilda.

“ Known! Lord bless you, yes Miss. He know’d every one of us, and all we wished and wanted, when his father was with his fine lady far away; but now I am sure we must pray for Lord Torrendale to last long, for heaven help us when the Captain comes to rule over us.”

“ You are not yet so well acquainted with Captain Fitzroy, or perhaps—”

“ Yes, yes, we know’d he well enough too; and don’t like him the better for that—egg and bird a wickedder, wilder, nice young gentleman,” (concluded the woman, recollecting it was a visitor at the mansion-house she was addressing,) “ could hardly be seen; and not so handsome neither to my thinking. I am sure you will repeat no harm of me Miss,” (she added,) “ I only say the same as every one else; that when the young squire came among us, every one was frightened, and looked to their own; but when Lord Strathallan came down it was a day of rejoicing throughout the whole village; but we shall never more rejoice at Strathallan’s return.”

“ And wert thou then indeed so much beloved, and yet beloved in vain !” thought Matilda, as slowly retiring from the rustic group, she indulged in the reflexions so naturally excited by the preceding scene. “ In vain thou wert the theme of the aged, the model for the young. An early tomb was with thee the reward of so much virtue, spirit, valour ; but no, he will not wholly die ; when the pride of victory is past, when the visions of glory are no more, thou shalt live in the fond hearts of those who with unavailing prayers and wishes have broken the silence of night ; the grateful thoughts of nature’s simple children, will ever hold thee dear, Strathallan ! such is the prevailing, the surviving power of goodness !”

Desirous of concealing from the family at Woodlands, how much she had been affected, she a little prolonged her walk by the road that led from the village. She feared she had too much neglected Arbella. A slight indisposition confined her to the house, and she had requested to receive daily accounts of the state of the family, in whose concerns

she felt so interested. Matilda thought she had now an hour she could spare her friend. It was a melancholy walk ; haunted by reflexions similar to those, to which she had just given vent, the oppression they caused was painful, and she only felt, as a refreshing breeze, the piercing coldness of the biting blast. Arbella was from home ; feeling herself better, and tired of the confinement of the house, she had strolled to a little distance : but which way she had taken, her aunt was unable to tell. Matilda had determined to seek her in one of her most usual walks ; and struck into a romantic winding road, terminating in a retreat called the Fountain of the Rocks. A few moments brought her to the spot ; but her friend was not there. Fatigued and disappointed, she yielded to a sensation of dejection and weariness, that tempted her to rest a few moments, and contemplate this scene, in happier days, a favourite haunt. A clear spring rushed from beneath a cavern formed by two meeting rocks. Trees planted near the entrance, added, in summer, to the cool-

ness and shade. The walk was not one of above two miles from her own house. Thither she had often stolen, to indulge in a rarely permitted pleasure; and, with no other companion than her Ossian, to suffer the sublimely mournful strains of the bard of Selma to steep her eyes in the dews of pensive transport. Now, the wind whistled shrill in the bare and leafless branches; but its dirge-like sound accorded better than summer lays with the present tone of her feelings. A passage in the poem she had last read there, involuntarily arose to her mind, with a train of attendant images with which before it had never been invested: it was in "Dar-thula," where the grey-haired King of Selma desires the bard to welcome the spirits of the departed warriors back to their native land.—"Ghosts of my fathers, bend—receive the falling chief;—whether he comes from a distant land, or rises from the rolling sea. Let his robe of mist be near—his spear that is formed of a cloud—place a half-extinguished meteor by his side, in the form of the hero's sword; and oh! let his

countenance be lovely, that his friends may delight in his presence."

This passage she had always read with a feeling of mournful pleasure; but never had the exquisite tenderness and delicacy of the last sentiment struck so forcibly upon her mind; never had the scene and every circumstance appeared appropriated before. As she recalled it, her bosom swelled with an irrepressible emotion. She tried to give utterance aloud to the concluding words, but something checked her voice; and she continued absorbed in soft and not unpleasing reverie, till interrupted by the sudden appearance of the person of all others the most calculated to dissipate the illusions of tenderness or sentiment. Smiling, in real or affected pity and astonishment, Miss Mountain stood before her. Never had that lady's presence been more unwelcome. The stocial composure she had assumed, since the first tidings of the family misfortune, had rendered her an object of complete dislike to Miss Melbourne. Scarcely able to conceive a female character in the composition of

which the softer feelings had been omitted, she gave her credit for an affectation, of which, in this instance, she was not guilty.

"Always at your meditations, Miss Melbourne," she exclaimed; "or rather, I fear, yielding to a melancholy, excusable indeed in the present posture of affairs, but assuredly not laudable. I walked out to meet you," she continued, "at the request of the family at Woodlands, by whom your presence is much missed. The day is closing, and they say they cannot lose a moment of the last evening you promised to spend with them. You see, I knew where to find you. You have surely to thank Mr. Sowerby and your father, for the philosophical and hardy education which makes you, like a true mountain-nymph, fond of being

"Rock'd by the tempest, nurtur'd on the wild,"

But are you not afraid, Miss Melbourne," (in that affectedly sententious tone Matilda most dreaded) "of increasing by solitude a tendency to the sensibility which it is our first duty to repress? I myself felt in dan-

ger of giving way to the 'torrent softness,' till completely consoled by that divine letter of Sulpicius to Cicero, which I read seven times over, and which fully demonstrated to me the unreasonableness of indulging in grief for the loss of any human being. Taking occasion to illustrate his thesis, by the desolation which had overwhelmed, not individuals only, but whole cities once the most flourishing in Greece,—'Remember then, oh, my heart,' continues the philosopher—"

"You are happy, Miss Mountain," interrupted Matilda, drily, "in being able to check the feelings of unavailing sympathy or regret, by considerations so consoling and satisfactory: but, as it is getting late, and really cold, I will, if you please, with the assistance of your arm, return to our friends, and we will defer the dissertation on Cicero till we are together."

Miss Mountain, who made it a principle never to let the appearance of displeasure disturb the placidity in which she had arranged her features, smiled, with her wonted serene complacency, at the weakness which

could not enter into her exalted reasonings, and led the way back towards the mansion.

The reappearance of the two ladies was truly welcome to the melancholy family group, who were assembled round the fire at that dull hour, which, between morning and evening, partakes of the pleasures of neither. It was after a pause in the conversation, now of no unfrequent recurrence, that Lady Torrendale, fancying she heard a sudden noise, started up; and, a moment afterwards, the door was thrown open, and a young man, of a countenance the most charming, a figure the most striking and noble Matilda had ever beheld, entered the room, and advanced, with all the eagerness of anxious affection, towards the Earl and Countess.

Miss Langrish, with a shriek, exclaimed, "It was Strathallan's ghost!"

Lady Emily, springing forward, with the instinct of warm and sisterly attachment, cried out, "It was Strathallan!"

Lord Torrendale, his spirits too weak from the indulgence of sorrow, to bear the admission of happiness so unexpected; scarcely

believing what he so ardently desired, gazed for a moment in fixed astonishment, neither understanding or almost hearing what was said around him : but when convinced, by the voice of his son, that he was indeed not a second time deceived, his joy could be only equalled by the sufferings he had previously endured.

The Countess mingled her congratulatory embraces with his; while the soft eyes of Matilda overflowed at the scene. A thousand questions, prompted by eager joy, curiosity, and surprise, were at once put to the thrice welcome stranger.

“ Do we not see him, possess him?—is he not once more among us?” said Lord Torrendale, in a voice scarcely articulate, from the excess of too delightful emotion. “ What more can we desire?”

“ Heavens ! did you not expect me?” exclaimed Strathallan, surprised in his turn; while the instant alteration in his countenance evinced the pain he endured at the idea of being the cause of it to those who were so dear.

Miss Mountain, who alone had preserved her sweet serenity undisturbed, undertook to explain. "I assure you, my Lord," she observed in conclusion, "your supposed loss was not regretted by your family only; strangers added the tribute of sympathy for so tragic an event. There is a young lady, who might at this moment stand as a model for a figure of Thanksgiving, in an allegorical piece on the cessation of the calamities of war. As she spoke, she pointed to Matilda, who, retiring from immediate observation, and unconscious how much she excited it, stood, her eyes involuntarily cast upwards, her whole countenance and figure beaming with pleasure, while an emphatic "Heaven be praised!" seemed just bursting from her lips.

Turning, for an instant, from the friends that surrounded him, Lord Strathallan looked at her;—and Miss Mountain felt sorry she had made the observation. The Countess took this opportunity to introduce Miss Melbourne to her son-in-law.

Matilda's cheeks glowed with painful con-

fusion, at her emotion having been made the subject of remark; and she experienced a relief when Lady Torrendale turned the attention of the company, by anxiously demanding of Strathallan, if he could explain the cause of a mistake which had been the source of so much suffering to all.

“That such an error should find its way into the public accounts, transmitted at that period, was not surprising,” he replied, “when we consider the degree of unavoidable irregularity introduced into them, by the death of our general, and the dangerous wound received by the second in command: that it should not be contradicted in England, I can only attribute to the circumstances, which happened to me in common with many others, of my having been separated from my regiment, by embarking in a different vessel from that in which it sailed.”

“And what was the reason of that confusion?” was the universal question.

“Must I tell you a romantic story?” he returned, forcing a smile; while a momen-

tary agitation, he could not suppress shewed the pain this recollection excited. "You remember, my Lord," (addressing Lord Torrendale), "the mention I made of the hospitality and kindness of the Spaniard Verdinha. Some time after the period when I had known his family, and when we were on our retreat, we were joined by a very fine youth, who requested to be allowed to serve among us, expressing a desire to act as a volunteer, and under my command. He said, he had caught his enthusiasm from his father, whom he hoped I still remembered. I did not know before that Verdinha had a son; but the young Antonio soon proved himself worthy of his parent. He bore all the fatigues and privations of our retreat without a murmur; but he was not destined to survive the fatal day in which our general gave battle at Corunna. In that battle he never left my side. In the moment that a French officer of cavalry aimed a stroke at me with his sabre, Verdinha advanced, and received it on his breast. A second blow having stunned me, so that for some minutes

I was thought to be dangerously wounded in the head, I was unable to afford him immediate assistance. My faithful Francis, seeing me unhorsed, carried me off the field: I was some time before I recovered; but the plumes and crest of the cap had broken the force of the stroke, so that I received no material injury. When I came to myself, the day was fallen, and the engagement over. The first object that met my eye was Antonio Verdinha, lying mortally wounded. I was entirely taken up with his situation, at the moment that our regiment, which was among the first that embarked, was already in all the bustle of departure. I imagine, that, in the hurry and confusion attending a night embarkation, I was at first supposed to be with them. The attention of every one was fully employed upon his own share in the important events that had passed, and were still taking place. The mistake was probably not discovered till it was too late; and some one who saw me fall might have recalled that circumstance to memory, and, on his arrival in England, have confirmed

the erroneous statement that at first appeared respecting me. Meantime, I could not leave Verdinha; whom, for his father's sake, I considered as a deposit peculiarly recommended to my care. I afforded him every assistance the time and place would allow; but it was in vain. That night he died in my arms; and it was breathing his last wishes that—

“Doubtless, 'twas some very important communication,” interrupted Lady Torrendale, in a tone which she meant should express friendly interest, but which had really more of petulant curiosity; “otherwise I shall never forgive the little creature the anguish and anxiety he has caused us.”

Strathallan seemed to struggle for a moment with strong and inward emotion; and then replied, in a composed voice, “It was.” He then added, as if anxious rapidly to bring his narrative to a conclusion, “I embarked with the rest of the troops on the 17th, anxious to rejoin those friends who were already on their way to England; and, from the moment her white cliffs appeared in view, I could scarcely restrain my throbb-

bing impatience to embrace those dearer ones, from whom I anticipated so fond a welcome. From the hour of my landing, I travelled with a haste, which, while it prevented my hearing any thing till now of the reports that have prevailed, rendered a letter equally unnecessary. How well is it rewarded," he continued, looking round him with affectionate joy, since I find myself once more encircled by this dear group—this centre, from which my thoughts, during my long absence, have so seldom wandered."

Bending forward, in breathless attention, Matilda had listened, "all ear," to the narration of Strathallan. The subject itself, to her, possessed an interest; but when he spoke, 'twas that voice that caused the scarce-perceived, involuntary start;—it was one which seemed in every heart to find its echo: deep, sweet, and penetrating, it commanded that its owner, once known, should be loved—once loved, should never be forgot.

Lady Torrendale and Miss Mountain kept up the conversation, and indulged their curiosity in a thousand questions, which were

answered with readiness and grace by Strathallan. Miss Mountain talked of the ancient Iberians and Lusitanians, of Sertorius and Viriatus; and Miss Melbourne wondered that the pedantry which had disgusted her but an hour before, should now appear so easy to be endured.

Whatever Strathallan related seemed placed before the eyes of his hearers. Where he described scenery, it was picture;—where action, it was nature, life, and motion. The various adventures and sufferings of the companions of the scenes he had gone through, were so faithfully painted in the changes of his expressive features, that it was impossible, at the first moment, for any one to remark the perfection of their regular and pensive beauty. The mind that beamed from that eye, the soul that flashed from that countenance could alone be regarded: it was one that could never be beheld without emotion, nor recalled without regret.

It is not surprising that where so much was to be asked, and so much to be related; where the enquirers were so anxious, and the nar-

rator so beloved, morning should peep in upon their vigil, and find the animated and happy circle still unsatisfied! At length, they broke up; but Oh! with what different feelings from those with which, some days before, the party had separated.

After a few hours rest, to recover from the effects of this tumultuous but pleasing occurrence, Matilda announced to Lady Torrendale the necessity of her return to the Rocks.

"Indeed you shan't, my little Matilda," replied her Ladyship, "you have shared in our dismals, and do you think I shall permit you to run away from our gaiety? I already meditate great designs; you must help me to mature them, and perhaps, we may yet astonish the world!"

"Not yet, dear Lady Torrendale," returned Miss Melbourne, in the same playful tone; "you, who have just had a son restored to you, must enter into the feelings of my mother, who may begin to regret my absence."

Spite of the entreaties of the Countess,

Matilda's resolution was unalterable ; and she departed, followed by the regrets of all, particularly of Spencer Fitzroy, and Strathallan. The latter lamented that his presence had driven away the "Nymph of the Woodlands." Yet, perhaps, she was not secure from his image, amid the romantic solitudes of the Rocks. It was one that could not be contemplated without danger. She, now, dropt the tear of pity at the distresses of his gallant friends ; now, saw him mournful and deserted, guarding, by his fading watch-fire, Verdinha's pale remains. Now, hurrying on board, divided from the loved companions of his perils,

"A lonely traveller on the moon-light sea."

Yet still, the look of checked but delighted surprise, of gratitude and interest, he had turned upon her, at the remark made by Miss Mountain, was that which most captivated her fancy, and played about her heart. And, while she found it impossible to banish its intrusive remembrance, was it to be wondered that Mr. Sowerby, for the first time, had reason to complain that "Matilda was not so attentive as usual to her studies"

CHAP. XIII.

Guerrier terrible,
 Dans le fort du combat,
 Quoiqu' invincible,
 Souvent le cœur lui bat,
 Car ce cœur sensible
 Souffre pour le soldat.

CHEVALIER DE BOUFFLERS,

au Prince Henri de Prusse.

MATILDA had an additional motive for wishing to return to the Rocks : she was recalled there by an uneasiness, the extent of which she would hardly own to herself, and yet that filled her affectionate heart with the most painful apprehensions. She had, for some time past, observed her father's health beginning to decline. A cold, caught by imprudently staying out too long on a botanical ramble, had brought on an attack

on his lungs, attended with a most distressing cough. Though the most alarming symptoms were now all removed, his strength, from that time, had visibly decreased; he could not take the long walks in which he used to indulge; and was sometimes for whole days confined to his couch: during this period it was Matilda's delight to relieve Mrs. Melbourne from the fatigue of incessant attendance. She read to her father, from such books as she knew were to his taste, the passages in which he particularly delighted. She arranged, and kept in order, the various collections, of which he was no longer able to make the daily review himself. Or, if she was ever from his side, it was when, bounding through the rocks and glades, with the grace and activity of a wood-nymph, she brought him home such specimens of plants and mosses as even winter could afford, and such as she knew he would have selected.

Sometimes she felt her spirits droop, from the excess of her filial anxiety; but, more frequently, hope presented her with the bright side of the picture; Mr. Melbourne

had got through the severe illness that had attacked him in the beginning of the winter, though of a nature, at once, irritating, and dangerous. Why should not the same temperance, and extreme serenity of disposition, which had been said so greatly to have contributed to his recovery before, now bear him up against this slight relapse, 'till the return of summer should completely restore him?

During this voluntary seclusion, Lady Torrendale often visited at the Rocks, to have the pleasure of complaining to her, and the livelier Miss Ferrars, as she termed it, "to rattle her up." But, on the whole, Mrs. Melbourne who had been pleased with that young lady, since the first moment of her introduction to her, thought she had no reason to repent the general invitation she had given her. Strathallan now was sometimes added to the groupe, and with respect to him (as was usually the case at the Rocks) opinions were divided. Mr. Melbourne thought him "an amiable, unassuming, well-informed young man." Mrs. Melbourne

“ the most interesting creature she had ever beheld since her retirement into the country.” Mr. Sowerby “ the most odious, unpleasant, impertinent fellow that ever presumed to make himself agreeable to the women.” A shade of pensiveness that occasionally obscured the animated brilliancy of his conversation, only rendered him an object of added interest, at least, in the eyes of the ladies. He had been placed in a situation that peculiarly called forth all the energies of his heart and mind. An actor amid scenes the most awful and important, he had witnessed, with the deep sensibility of a soul yet unhardened in calamity or guilt, the outrages of the oppressor, the sufferings of the oppressed ; had shared in the struggle of a generous people, and had lamented the fall of valour ; merit, too often alike beloved and exerted in vain. To a mind of a common mould, the miseries of the past would have only been recollected, amid the restored gaiety of the social circle, to add to the happiness, and enhance the sense of security the present moment afforded : but Strathallan’s was not that mind.

Meantime, Lady Torrendale did not long delay putting the grand design she meditated into execution. It was from Arbella that Matilda had the first intimation of it.

"Her Ladyship," said she, "has disposed of the clothing she has been making up this winter, so much to her satisfaction, and has met with so much gratitude from the soldiers' families she has relieved since their return from abroad, that it has converted her taste for charity into a passion; and she means to extend it, by a subscription ball to be given at S———. All the families of any consequence, who came down to spend the Christmas, approve the scheme. The money for the tickets is to be appropriated for the benefit of the widows and children of those soldiers in Strathallan's regiment, that fell at Corunna. The Countess is, of course, Lady Patroness—your mamma is named for another—Spencer and Strathallan are to be two of the stewards. In order to draw more attention it is given out that the poet Alcaus will, in the course of the evening, deliver an address suitable to the occasion. He is to

peak it standing between two of the most interesting of the sufferers, with their children in their arms. We are sure they will be two of the handsomest women in the regiment, for Spencer is to chuse them."

"But all this time you do not know whether we shall go."

"O you certainly go—Spencer has said it, and Lionhart has sworn it."

Poor Lionhart! he has had but a dull Christmas. We must not let February pass without his having some amusement.

"All these are very cogent reasons, yet still I may hesitate."

"No, no—Eyes must never be contradicted; he is absolute—by the bye he has taken upon himself to pass the tickets among the ladies, and we have little fear for his success in the cause of melting charity. You know it is a trick in the family—did Lady Torrendale ever tell you that old story? Then you would laugh to see the importance he assumes, (continued Arbella with increased volubility,) while determining our dresses for this important occasion. Did I

tell you he was to fancy the dresses for you, Lady Torrendale, and me? She chuses we shall be alike—see what it is to affect youth! Every morning we have consultations, in which Spencer has the casting voice; from his infallible judgment there is no appeal. Oh if you could imagine the “airs and graces, and doubts and disdains” he treats us with, while the respective merits of silver gauze, and gold muslin, and prince’s plumes, and wreaths of roses are under consideration.—Miss Mountain, who has lately acquired or recovered a quantity of precious French, compliments him on this attention to our attire, and says we shall be ‘*Les Graces ATTIRÉES par l’Amour.*’ At length it is determined we shall figure in Spanish dresses, as the most appropriate, and we are to be as fine as pink puffs, slashed sleeves, and silver trimmings can make us—the hair in a net à l’Espagnol, the net of silver like the trimmings; and it is to be fastened in front with a plume of bird of Paradise feathers.—Is not that pretty? Fantastical. These are the last orders in council, but I cannot be

quite positive with respect to their execution, for Captain Fitzroy changes and determines, and hesitates, and retracts 'so' often, as poor Miss Langrish says, that it is impossible to know whether he will be of the same opinion to-morrow."

"And you like all that?"

"Why, truth to say, 'tis not *le genre sublime*, but it is very pretty."

However she might trifle with Arbella, Matilda felt an unconquerable repugnance to the idea of mingling in a scene of festivity while her father's health continued in its present uncertain state. When pressed by Lady Torrendale for the cause of her refusal, she thought she owed it to the general kindness and friendship she had met from her, not to treat her with common-place evasion, but to allege her real reasons. Matilda would have disdained to make a display of her filial anxiety to any indifferent person; but she thought that, in such frankness, she paid the highest compliment to her noble friend; who would require only to be informed of them,

to enter immediately into the nature of her feelings—she little knew Lady Torrendale.

“ I am so vexed for Strathallan’s sake,” she said, “ after listening with great signs of impatience to Matilda’s detail. He is such a charming waltzer, and had made himself so sure of the honor of——”

“ I am sorry to disappoint Lord Strathallan” replied Miss Melbourne laughing, “ but——”

“ Oh child,” interrupted Lady Torrendale, with a toss of her head, “ I did not mean that. Your fine men now may be piqued, offended, but can never be *disappointed*.” Matilda felt hurt in her turn—the Countess did not give up her point, and on the very day of the entertainment called with Captain Fitzroy, resolved to make her give up her design or repent her determination. Perceiving that Matilda, who began to see into her intention, listened with great indifference, Captain Fitzroy, who had been, till now, stationed in the reserve, thought this the moment, with most effect, to bring up his force.

With all that persuasiveness of address which he had been taught to think resistless; he urged the disappointment the whole party would endure on her refusal; the brilliancy of the expected *fête*, which was given partly on account of his brother Strathallan's return; and concluded,

“ Consider how much I have desired; I have ‘ambitioned’ the honor of your presence, when it leads me thus repeatedly to solicit you to change your cruel resolution. I ask it, Miss Melbourne, as a favour; and you must be aware that in general—I have not been used to entreat.”

A suppressed smile, which slightly played about the lips of Matilda, did not prevent the firm refusal she still persisted in giving, from being couched in the politest and most obliging terms. But the haughty Spencer, whom nothing less could satisfy than unconditional submission, turned proudly from her, and, during the rest of the visit, never addressed another word to her.

Her Ladyship stayed on, apparently for

no other purpose than to make Matilda regret the pleasure she had just refused.

"We shall be a great crowd," said she, "and we have therefore laid out a suite of four apartments. A ball-room, promenading-room, card, and supper-room. The supper-room will be the most delightful; for as we are to be all *à l'Espagnol*, it will be lined, on each side, with orange trees, in boxes, intermingled with which, will be our trophies and colours. The famous man from London, the only man in the world who does those things well, will give the strains of every bird from the redbreast to the nightingale, from a place where he will be perfectly concealed from view; while artificial birds, hopping from branch to branch, will assist the illusion. This, I think, is new, and was quite my own idea. But it is impossible, by describing a part, to give you any notion of the whole effect. It will be one scene of fairysm, of splendor, of perfumes, of music; you have, no doubt, some more '*rational*' amusement in view with your '*FRIEND*'

Mr. Sowerby ; some phantasmagoria perhaps, or magic lantern, or—”

“ Pray Lady Torrendale,” interrupted Spencer, “remember to give Miss Hautenville notice she must not appear in that blue muslin, it misbecomes her complexion so much.”

“ Certainly child, but what reason can I give?”

“ That I cannot bear blue and buff: tell her so with my compliments. And I wish to Heaven you could as easily persuade Miss De Courcy never to appear in pink again. I affect nothing when I declare that, at the last ball, her pink gossamer made me suffer cruelly, yet she will not leave it off.”

“ Well, if it hurts your nerves, you had better tell her so ”

“ Gad so I will. If she would but dress in white, she would be the handsomest woman I ever saw—as it is, she is the handsomest woman (looking round him) that I have met since my return to Derbyshire.”

The Captain rose; and Lady Torrendale, after paying her parting civilities to Mrs.

Melbourne, turned back on the staircase to exclaim to Matilda, "So you won't be one of us; adieu, my soul, I leave you to read Zimmerman upon Solitude, or some such pretty, tender, sentimental amusement."

Taking her son's arm, she departed; leaving Miss Melbourne no other uneasiness than that which arose from the discovery, in her noble friend, of a pleasure (an incomprehensible one to this child of the woods and mountains,) in trying to inflict unnecessary pain.

Scarcely was Lady Torrendale gone, when a new visitor, in all the pleasing hurry and flutter of preparation appeared. It was Arbella Ferrars.

"My dearest creature," she said, "I am come for the sole purpose of trying to shake your inflexible resolution respecting this ball."

"I am sorry," said Matilda, "it is taken, and that I must content myself with making you the same excuse I have just given Lady Torrendale and Captain Fitzroy."

"Fitzroy! what business had he—that is

to say, he knew I meant to speak to you," continued Arbella, recollecting herself; while the assurance, from Matilda, that she would not go, restored to her features that serenity of which a slight shade of discontent for an instant had robbed them. "Certainly my love, if you had good reason for not going, you were right to be firm; and I am sure you would not let any thing Spencer could say influence you."

"Certainly not," repeated Miss Melbourne, with a look, which, though mild, open, and satisfied as usual, yet possessed an expression that brought the colour into Miss Ferrar's cheeks, and forced her to take refuge in acknowledging the second "whole and sole" purpose of her visit. She had not been able to procure a bird of Paradise plume that pleased her, and, recollecting that Matilda, who often received, from her father, presents of rare and beautiful feathers, might have a larger collection, she had come to request she would let her select some for the evening. Her friend, too happy to oblige, laid open her store to her inspection. Arbella, when she

had suited herself, said, that if Matilda would admit the trespass, she would dine and dress at her house—"that at least, if I do not see you at the ball, I may enjoy, 'till the last moment, your sweet society."

After dinner, the candles being set, and Arbella placed before the glass, she began that sort of discourse, between conversation and soliloquy, in which young ladies, suffering under a perturbation of mind, sometimes like to indulge.

"So! we shall be rather dashing, rather out of the common way. Miss Mountain is to be the third grace for want of a better. What a buzzing there is in my poor head—I suppose it is all the noise I shall hear to night." Then, humming part of a tune—"Fitzroy's waltz, did you ever hear it? it is by Krumpbh; and is the sweetest thing of the kind, that ever was composed—I shall see him waltzing to night—see him! I shall. It is impossible to give an idea of his figure, of his attitudes; grace, and flexibility were never seen before. Indeed I think the last word was expressly invented for him. Now Strath-

allan is a charming figure, but Spencer is such a dear fellow, he is the exact waltzing size."

"That is very good of him."

"Good! nay now you are laughing."

"No indeed; you praised him for it as if were a voluntary merit."

"Did I! I only meant that Strathallan waltzes very well, but he is a little too tall, and besides he——You'd like Spencer better; that man, that eldest son of Lord Torrendale's, is a heart of rock, of adamant, of perfect adamant; admires nothing on earth but himself. Would not waste an hour's attention on an angel. No, not on an angel," continued Arbella, considering herself more attentively in the glass, and fixing the plumes among her clustering tresses. "To attempt him is mere loss of powder and shot."

"Perhaps you have tried," said Matilda.

"Perhaps I have," Arbella replied.—
"There now I think that will do pretty well; I must be going my dear girl."

All this time her friend had assisted with her usual obliging sweetness at the operations

of her toilet. As she was standing behind Miss Ferrars, to arrange a part of her hair, Arbella caught a glimpse of her lovely blooming features, that appeared in the glass just above her own. "O that will never do," she exclaimed, hastily rising, "for you know it is not for me to say with truth,

"Mine's the prettier shadow far than thine Matilda*.

and, perhaps, at that moment, she did not very sincerely regret, that, she was not, at the ball, to endure a comparison with the perfect and eclipsing beauty of her friend."

A message from Mr. Melbourne, requesting to see the fair visitor before she departed for the Assembly, delayed her for a few moments.

"I am glad my father will see you," said Miss Melbourne, "it will raise his spirits which have not been so good since his last attack."

"Aye, I always said how it would end," interrupted Miss Ferrars, shaking her head.

* Dryden's Arthur and Emmeline.

" I always said how it would end. There's Sir Edward Meadows who caught his death the other day, hunting for glow-worms in the dew, and Mr. Peak who broke his neck in a botanizing ramble to ——." Matilda's eyes filled with tears.

" Arbella, I am ever ready to listen to your anxieties, but for mine you have no consideration."

" Bless me how thoughtless I am! Can you forgive me? I have a mind to force you to the ball to dispel the ugly phantoms I have so unfortunately raised—you will have such a loss in not seeing the Shears!"

" The Shears!"

" O, I had forgot—That sublime poet, known to the world by the name of Mr. Spring, to the Muses by that of Alcæus, is, I understand, in Lady Lyndhurst's circle, familiarly designated by the name, style, and title of the Shears—from a certain habit he has of cutting across whatever people are saying with as great a promptitude, and as little remorse, as that most useful weapon of industry. Alcæus is a wit, fancies himself a genius, and

the whole time you are speaking to him, instead of attending, is deliberating in his own head, what he shall say when it comes to his turn ; then, if he happens to have a brilliant conception, bolts it out, totally regardless whether it forms a suitable answer or not to the preceding observation. There is a piece of literary anecdote for you, to amuse the tea-table ; wish me in return good luck, and plenty of conquests ; for oh my dear ! sometimes one's evil star prevails ; and then, when you begin to feel the night wearing away, and the entertainment drawing to a close, yet all your pleasure still to come, and the dear object of your hopes as far distant as ever, what a dreary, what a frightful solitude a ball room becomes ! I cannot imagine a more truly pitiable situation ; and, I know not how, I feel a kind of foreboding—but no, it cannot be," continued the lively Arbella, whose mind

" Quick as her eyes, and as unfixed as those ;"

had already seized another leading idea.

" Spencer, dear Spencer, cannot, will not

change; how well he begins to look! such a countenance, such eyes, such teeth, and such beautiful mustacioes—oh! I wish he were here; but I am keeping your father expecting me," she resumed, after this curious climax, "*Allons donc!*" for the dear invalid.

Though stretched on a couch and visibly ill, at Miss Ferrars' approach, Mr. Melbourne languidly smiled with benevolent pleasure; "Why now I declare," said he, "those birds of Paradise plumes look very well; but, perhaps, my dear young lady, you would have liked a plume of heron's feathers, or some other bird's better. Why did you not freely apply to me? I should have offered, but that I thought you young ladies might require something more to be done to them, than I do; something that Matilda knows, with your Carbery or your——"

"Oh Sir," said Arbella, "I am already made rich with gifts, your daughter is so generous, that if Miss Mountain were here, she would compare her to Venus, helping to endow and adorn Pandora."

"But really my love," turning suddenly to Matilda, "why don't you go?"

Her friend had too lately received a lesson upon ingenuous simplicity and confidence, to be easily inclined again to suppose that others thought and felt like herself, she therefore replied by some general and polite evasion, allusive to her health and various avocations.

"Well I declare I am so sorry that—if it were not all settled, I believe I should be tempted to——"

"Oh don't think of such a thing, what would Spencer say," interrupted Matilda, archly smiling, and applying a favorite expression of Miss Ferrars.

"Spencer! I assure you he is the last person, at this moment, in my thoughts. There, you have made me forget my fan; and now where are my gloves? Adieu, I must leave you, I ordered the carriage should come for me rather early because I have to help my Aunt to receive the party from Woodlands, who call at our house on their way to the Assembly. Expect me to-morrow

with a lachrymatory full of the tears of the despairing beaux."

"Arbella is a good girl," said Mrs. Melbourne, "and, I truly believe, would prefer Matilda to any thing in the world, except her last admirer, or her diamond necklace."

"They are all very good-natured," replied Mr. Melbourne, "and though I think Matilda was wise not to go; yet, if ever young people were inclined not to grudge the trouble and loss of time such amusements cost, it would be on an occasion like this. Where the object is benevolence, even a ball may be rendered interesting. We have taken care they should be no losers by our non-attendance. But, however, it was very kind and polite of Lady Torrendale to take the trouble to come and be so pressing with Matilda, and that pretty young man her son, too. As far as I can judge, he has not as much in him as his brother, who is really a fine fellow; but he is equally pleasant, and, I believe, very good natured and charitable; for when I used to walk about more, I often met him coming out of the cottages."

Matilda, smiling at her father's unconsciousness of the little sacrifice she had made him, enjoyed it, in secret, the more perhaps on that account: and the tumultuous throb of expectation, in the bosom of Arbella, could hardly equal the serene satisfaction she experienced when Mr. Melbourne, delighted with her innocent and companionable gaiety, fondly call her his little reader, his nurse, and secretary; and declared it impossible to remember his illness or infirmity, in the company of such a child.

The entrance of Mr. Sowerby interrupted effusions of parental tenderness, so deep-felt, and so well deserved. Conceiving it impossible his young pupil could resist the repeated solicitations of her titled friends, he had come to spend an hour with his deserted neighbour, as he imagined him to be. He had just exclaimed, with the lengthened emphasis which he knew so well how to give, "And so Matilda is gone to this a-bom-inable ball," when the sight of his fair pupil, seated by her father's couch, and engaged, at that moment, in sketching some botanical

drawings, under his inspection, a little disarmed his wrath. He had scarcely taken a chair when it was near being roused again, by the appearance of a servant who said a person waited to speak to Miss Melbourne.

"What person, what messenger?" cried Sowerby, "send him away." But, before he could be obeyed, a boy, with a basket in his hand full of dried plants, presented himself, and said to Matilda, "Here be the roots of the odd shaken heath that your Ladyship said you wanted to get for your father, and couldn't; and hearing as Squire Melbourne was so main poorly, and didn't go out as he used to do, I thought I go myself and try to get some from my aunt, who lives at Ridgefield, six miles off; for I remembered as she used to say she had 'em; so I got up yearly, and ax'd her."

"And pray, who may you be? my good boy," said Mr. Melbourne.

"Lord Sir, doesn't your honor remember little Tommy Leaves as you gave the bark and port to, after the favors, and was so kind to.

To be sure I be growed, and handsome, since that time, but I shall never forget."

"I never gave you any thing," returned his honor, whose memory did not appear to be so extensive as his generosity.

"O surely, you sent every day Sir, and mother says as how ——"

"Well, well—may be so," said the placid Mr. Melbourne, resuming his studies, and concluding with a very favorite expression of his; by which if he could not immediately call to remembrance a circumstance, he, at least, signified his assent by giving up the point. Matilda received, with one of her sweetest smiles, this welcome attention to her father, while Mr. Melbourne observed, after the boy was gone "well, it was truly obliging of Boughs, was not that his name? to go so far to get me those specimens, particularly as I could not send my servants, for Robert is gone to see his wife, John is sick, and Thomas does not like taking long walks."

"Humph!" said Sowerby, "they never do any thing over and above for me at Clifden-

down." In spite of his peculiarities, and habits of almost utter seclusion, a disposition gentle and indulgent to an extreme, a great liberality to all who depended on him, and a benevolence mild, and diffusive, though silent as the streams that flowed from his native Rocks, had endeared Mr. Melbourne to his humble neighbours, who were all eager to testify their good will by any little service it was in their power to perform: while to Sowerby, on the contrary, his servants and tenants rather paid the worship of fear than love. However different their characters, both seemed at this moment as if they were vying with each other who could most compensate to Matilda, by their affectionate praises, for the absence of gayer society. When her merits were the theme, Mr. Melbourne was ever eloquent; but Sowerby went beyond a parent's praise in his affectionate partiality. Mrs. Melbourne's playful wit enlivened the social group, over which the genius of domestic happiness seemed for the moment to repose. Leaving therefore Miss Melbourne, between two beaux, whose



attentions, however sincere, will not, I fear, be envied by any of her youthful competitors, we will go back to the beginning of this eventful day : and endeavour to trace some scenes that had passed at Lady Torrendale's, and that may afford matter of conjecture whether all within was so serene, as it outwardly appeared, from the triumphant gaiety of her Ladyship, and the fascinating ease of Captain Fitzroy.

CHAP. XIV.

O thou, the friend of man assigned,
With balmy hands his wounds to bind,
And charm his frantic woe :
When first distress with dagger keen,
Broke forth to waste his destined scene
Thy wild unsated foe !

Come Pity, come, by fancy's aid
Even now my thoughts, relenting maid,
Thy temple's pride design ;
Its southern site, its truth complete
Shall raise a wild enthusiast heat
In all who view the shrine.

COLLINS. ODE TO PITY.

"IT'S a folly to talk, Lady Torrendale," were Mrs. Stockwell's first words in their morning *tête-a-tête*, " I've advanced more than I can afford, and I'll advance no more."

" But, my dear Mrs. Stockwell, is this the moment to stop, when Spencer has set his

heart upon following up the plan with spirit? I dare not face him without the promise of this thousand pounds. Indeed I dare not; no one has any idea of his temper, who only knows him—as you know him. Surely you would not prevent his making an advantageous arrangement with his creditors for such a trifle; and if he has been a little imprudent this last year, and reduced me to some difficulties, would you increase them when you could so easily”—

“ Lady Torrendale,” said Mrs. Stockwell, in a tone that she meant should be solemn; “ I have borne a great deal, and concealed a great deal, and I never let Lord Torrendale guess.”

“ Oh! if you still allude to the sum you lent me, to make up what I wanted to advance him before I left Rosevilla, you were certainly very good; but consider it is all for your own Spencer—your dear Spencer, who came into Derbyshire for the sole object of seeing you;” (and recruiting his finances a little at your expence,) she might have added, aside. “ He has applied to me; but,

I declare I am at this moment so in want of money."


" Ah ! that is so like me," resumed Mrs. Stockwell, " I am in sad want of money too, I assure you."

" Pray, pray, my dear Mrs. Stockwell," interrupted Lady Torrendale, forgetting her former request, in the habitual dislike she had to this assimilation to herself, a figure of speech in which her less genteel friend was very apt to indulge, but then resuming her former manner, she added, " Come, there's a dear soul, I know you will listen to reason ; and I have very little time to waste in argument. In short Spencer has taken it into his head, and it must be done."

" Well then, if Spencer has taken it into his head," returned Mrs. Stockwell, with a mixture of bitterness and familiarity, " Spencer must put it out of his head again, that's all. You know, Lady Torrendale," she pursued, suddenly assuming a whining tone of sentimental reproach, " while I thought Captain Fitzroy had any regard for me or mine, there was nothing I would not do for

him: but now, I see he does nothing but make gibes and jeers, and turn me into ricadool; I should be a fool, so I should, to go on as I have done. I'll not be duped; I'll tell Lord Torrendale, so I will; I don't forget his saying, when I wished my niece Arbella could appear at Lady Lyndhurst's, that there was ne'er a shabby room for her; as if *my* niece was to be put off with a shabby room, at any Countess's in England; when, I am sure, I spared neither pains nor cost in her edication, and sent her to the very same school with the Honorable Miss de Courcy; for all I wished was to make a true bred lady of her."

"And she is so," interrupted the Countess obligingly. "You must have forgotten your French, my dear Mrs. Stockwell, or you would perceive my son must have meant *Chaperon*. Miss Ferrars could not appear, without one, in a manner suitable to her station and fortune; and, as you do not know Lady Lyndhurst, and



at that time I did not visit her, he could not immediately fix upon one he thought eligible. "Is that all poor Spencer's offence? then I think he does not deserve such resentment."

"All his offence! I wish I could number his offences. T'other day, at dinner, he asked me if I didn't like blankets; deluding plainly to the business poor Mr. Stockwell used to follow: and, on some one's mentioning my son's reproaching marriage with his cousin, he turns quick upon me, and asks me how long that affair had been upon the 'Carpet.' If 'tis the most melancholious subject in the world; it's enough that I should open my mouth to set him laughing. It's all one what I say. When I consoled with him about his poor brother's being 'macerated' by the French, I could see he could hardly keep his countenance. But, what I take as the cruellest and most ill-naturedest, and most treacherousest thing of all is, his coaxing and wheedling, (flirting I suppose he calls it) with my poor niece Arbella, to induce her

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to forsake her true lover, and so get possession of her and her fortune."

"And so get possession of her and her fortune," repeated her Ladyship, haughtily drawing up, and all the *engrafted* pride of the house of Torrendale and Strathallan expressed in her countenance. "Did I hear right? are you conscious Mrs. Stockwell, whom you are addressing? Have a care of what you advance; do you think it possible *my* son could for a moment have a serious thought of *your* niece? It shall be my care that he shall perfectly undeceive you, and prove to your satisfaction, that he has no intention of rivalling Mr. Sam Stockwell in her good graces."

"Dear me, I'm sure I never thought he had," resumed the good lady, frightened at what she had said, and desirous if possible to retract, "and for that very reason I tried to break the neck of the thing in its first beginning; and your Ladyship is aware I discouraged it as much as possible; and so long as a matter of three years ago, when Arbella was at school, and I found he had

contrived to make acquaintance with her in the holidays, and was a coming down to Woodlands about her, I never, from that blessed time, let her come home to her "vocation," and afterwards when he and his brother still used to call, and Captain Fitzroy expressed himself surprised that she should be always away, I imbuked him severely, and approached him as the sole cause: but it seems the nature of all the young gentlemen to withstand my 'approaches.' I put the case most pathetically to him, and represented as such persecution, was ill-using any Lady. 'Now suppose Captain Fitzroy,' says I, 'you was in love with me.'—

"Enough, enough, dear Mrs. Stockwell, you have quite convinced me that you see the thing in the light I wish it. And now nothing remains but that you should consent to oblige me in the little arrangement I mentioned. Spencer, I am certain, could never have intentionally offended you. If you examine into the slights you fancy you have experienced, you will find they originated in something as trifling as the offer he unfortu-

nately made you, of veal blanquets at dinner; and as to carping at 'carpets,' I only wish, for your sake, he had said on the *tapis*. Then remember, dear Madam," continued Lady Torrendale, alternately soothing and dictating to her, "that on my introducing Miss Ferrar's to-night, depends her being brought into fashion."

"Fashion's a good paper substitute," observed Mrs. Stockwell, with more shrewdness than the Countess fancied she possessed; "but I own I am one of them that's for the bullion. What security pray have I, that I shall be ever paid my money?"

"The best security in the world, the estate of Strathallan."

"I beg your pardon, Lady Torrendale; but that's not your son's; it's the young Lord's."

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Stockwell, that's not the young Lord's, as you are pleased to call him, but the old Lord's; and can, and *shall* be given to my son whenever he pleases. Did you imagine that because Strathallan liked to spend his time at it as a

hunting seat, and perhaps because he took his title from it, that it was his? Far from it; so now having proved clearly Spencer's power of satisfying any future demand, I am sure you will consider the urgency of the case, and"—

Mrs. Stockwell reflecting that if she *did* play her cards genteelly, and sometimes accommodate her more fashionable acquaintance, it was in fact her only ticket of admission to that society of which she was so ambitious, resolved, after a short debate with herself, to do what she had often done before; put her affronts in her pocket, and take her money out of it. "Well, since it's for the last time, and your Ladyship's so very anxious, though they *do* say that you should not sell the skin of the bear 'till he has been killed.—I don't care if I—"

"That's my own Mrs. Stockwell! I knew it would come to this: I may tell Spencer you are all adorable; may I not? I must break up congress now, for I have to plague Miss Melbourne, and to quiz Miss de Courcy,

and half a hundred more things to do before I dress for this teasing ball."

After this unpleasant conversation, the result of a long postponed *eclaircissement* with Mrs. Stockwell, which that lady, who conceived herself much neglected by Captain Fitzroy, had often demanded in vain; we must behold Lady Torrendale all brilliant with jewels, and redolent with sweets; and retaining apparently no trace of the disagreeable occurrences of the morning.

The appearance of the graces, the lovely birds of paradise from Woodlands, at the assembly at S—— seemed to be all that delayed the expected pleasures and festivities of the evening. The rooms, devoted to the purposes of promenading and dancing, were adorned with a taste, an attention to embellishment and effect, which showed that no provincial hand had directed the arrangement of the whole. Captain Fitzroy, whom it cost nothing to promise to repair any damage he might occasion, had exercised a little of the transforming power of fashion, in extending, beautifying, throwing down par-

titions, and raising up platforms, as additional ideas presented themselves to his fertile imagination. Every thing was gay, airy, simple, yet appropriate and elegant. The Temple of Pity, in perspective, surrounded by lights, flowers, and fragrance, formed a pleasing termination to the whole. This little edifice, raised by several steps, and composed entirely of transparencies, partook much of the nature of theatric illusion. The poem of Collins suggested the hint; and such was its beauty, its "Truth Complete," that, could the second bard of Arun have viewed the warm creation of his fancy thus happily realized, he would surely have afforded it a languid smile of pensive pleasure. The paintings in the different compartments of the temple represented some of the scenes that most interest and affect in history's various page:

" There pictures toil shall well relate,
How chance, or hard involving fate
O'er mortal bliss prevail ;"

and in the centre of the figure of the presiding deity, her

“ Sky-worn robes of tenderest blue,
And eyes of dewy light”

were seen, in all their enchanting and ærial splendor. Beside an altar, so contrived that he could, at once command the whole circle, appeared the poet. In the address, which he immediately began, the young bard Alcæus well knew how to take advantage of the enthusiasm of the moment ; pointing to the two victims of the recent struggle, who were distinguished by their beauty and youth, and drest with a simplicity that was rendered at once modest and becoming, he now called on the tenderness of the patriotic females of his country, to feel for their sex's distresses in an humbler sphere ; now directed their attention to the unconscious innocents that sported in their arms ; and, all-unknowing of the fate from which charity had rescued them, played with the fragrant sweets and blossoms that surrounded them, or smiled in sweet security on the festive group. His exertions were rewarded with success. The soft contagion of pity was caught with resistless force ; the feeling of regret, excited by the fate of our

country's brave defenders, was converted into a principle of active benevolence, the effects of which did not expire with the illusions of the night.

The Ode being finished, most of the company now crowded round Lady Torrendale to express the pleasure they had enjoyed, or the interest they experienced; receiving each with unembarrassed ease, she performed the pleasing duties of her situation with grace and applause; and it was considered as an exclusion from all pretension to fashion not to be presented to the lady patroness of the evening.

But Strathallan, the lost, the restored Strathallan, was, from the moment he appeared, the centre of universal attention. He arrived later than the rest of the party; and was instantly surrounded by friends and acquaintance, each endeavouring to surpass the other, in the sincerity of their welcome and in the warmth of their congratulations. Those who had been introduced to him before at Woodlands, were glad again to express the joy they felt at seeing him once more restored to

their circle ; while others, who had not seen him since his return, were equally pleased with this opportunity of advancing their claim to his notice. Strathallan felt these unbidden testimonies of the general sympathy and interest he had excited, with that deep yet dignified sensibility, which so peculiarly marked his character. Looking round on the gay crowd, where every countenance beamed with kindness, and every hand was stretched forth in friendship, he yielded without reserve to the delicious illusion of the moment, and the grateful pleasure, which spoke in those gentle eyes,

“ That seem'd to love whate'er they look'd upon,”

pourtrayed the genuine overflowings of a soul, where manly fortitude and every soft and kindlier affection were sweetly blended.

The company had now begun to catch the gaiety and spirit of the scene. The sprightly notes of the bands engaged for waltzes, Spanish dances, and country dances, were rung in alternate murmur of trial and preparation ; and the light of the lustres around

could scarcely equal the blaze of jewellery, or the more captivating brightness of the sparkling eyes and blushing cheeks, overspread with the gay hue of expected pleasure.

Lord Strathallan opened the ball with Miss Mountain; and already was each lady engaged, save Miss Ferrars (who, for her own reasons, discouraged every address) and Miss Hautenville, who stood; her rigid features and thin spare form adorned with a net of becoming yellow, her countenance composed into a smile, and her fan employed in gaily beating time, till the happy moment should arrive, that should bring some enamoured youth to her feet.

Arbella, ignorant of the implied compact of the morning, between her aunt and Lady Torrendale, had contrived to keep herself disengaged, in order, as she said, that she might not disappoint dear Fitzroy, when he asked her. 'Dear Fitzroy,' however, did not seem in haste to claim the honour she designed him. Independently of the reason above alluded to, it was suffi-

cient for the vain and capricious Spencer, that Miss Ferrars was at the ball, and Miss Melbourne was not, for him to wish her away, and her friend in her place. Not that he had any preference to Miss Melbourne. That very morning, had he been asked, which of the two he would rather see at night, he would have been probably much perplexed to make his election. But then, Matilda "ought not" to have been equally indifferent to the idea of meeting him: "she ought" to have known he was the best dancer in England, and to have been desirous to see him to such an advantage: "she ought" to have shown a readiness to comply with his request, when he had condescended to acknowledge such a compliance would give him pleasure; and to have felt anxious to witness a fête that was planned partly under his inspection. He was also displeased, though he would scarcely own it to himself, at the universal attention his noble brother engrossed; and these various causes having contributed to the discomposure of his temper, he revenged it all on the innocent Arbella.

Instead of dancing, he continued walking up and down the room, arm in arm with his friend Lionhart, occasionally looking at Miss Ferrars, sufficiently to mark that she was the subject of their conversation. "Now do, pray, Lionhart; don't you see the tender, drooping fair one is waiting your approach? Did not I bring you down for the express purpose of 'superseding' me?"

"Nonsense!—I won't be refused—I won't be laughed at—I know it is you she expects."

"Me! I did not intend to dance to night; but if I do, I believe it must be with Miss De Courcy: she is the most tolerable woman in the room, since Miss Melbourne is not here. There—make no more delay—I commission you—represent me."

"That is very easy! You know, it is in vain for me to attempt to please any one who has seen you first."

"Oh, you flatter!—surely it is not so," resumed Spencer: and then, leaning towards him he whispered something in his ear, at which Captain Lionhart laughed heartily;

while poor Arbella, who could not hear what was said, but was conscious it related to her, sat in silent vexation, uncertain whether it was best to conceal her mortification, or give way to her displeasure. At length, not to afford Spencer an additional triumph by sitting out, she suffered herself to be led, by a partner of very high rank, to join the festive scene; at the same time that the inconstant Fitzroy conducted the fair Miss De Courcy to her place. This young lady, who was her intimate friend, took occasion to trip up to her, and just whisper—"Lord! my dear, what did you do to your drapery? it sits quite ill: you certainly caught it going out of the carriage. Never mind," she continued, observing Arbella looked a little alarmed, "you can't possibly alter it now. I only thought it right to tell you of it:" and, satisfied with this exertion of friendship, she ran back to rejoin her partner.

Meanwhile, Lady Torrendale, observing Stockwell was disengaged, advanced towards the unemployed youth, who, having frizzed out his hair in the form of a powder-puff,

and shortened his legs to the size of those of a duck, imagined himself an Adonis, and stood, negligently quizzing the ladies, and expecting universal admiration. On her Ladyship's asking him, if he did not chuse to dance? "No, ma'am," he answered indolently, "I never dance unless I can get the handsomest woman in the room for a partner."

Her Ladyship bowed acquiescence to this sensible and modest reply; and, leaving the young gentleman to the "handsomest woman in the room," moved to another part of it.

To the waltzing, Spanish dances had succeeded; and the gay foreign strains of the Fandango and Bollero were introduced by Captain Fitzroy, in honour of his brother's return. Spencer distinguished himself in the management of the Castanet; but all eyes were fixed, in preference, on Strathallan.

"Is that Lord Strathallan?" whispered a young lady, who had just arrived; "that elegant young man, who is so attentive to Lady Torrendale?"

"No; that is her Ladyship's own son,

Captain Fitzroy. Lord Strathallan is just crossing the room this moment—that fine figure decorated with a foreign order; you know, he is a Knight of the Tower and Sword—‘*La Torre y Spada.*’ ”

“ Yes, I know him now; I shall never mistake the other for him again. How I longed to see him, after that strange report that he was dead ! ”

Such were the whispers that surrounded the welcome wanderer.

“ To him each lady’s look was lent,
On him each warrior’s eye was bent.”

Yet still some secret dissatisfaction seemed, after the first, to prevent his wholly enjoying the pleasure his presence inspired. He spoke little; and after dancing with Miss Mountain preferred taking out Miss Ferrars to any of the other ladies who hoped, from the privilege of acquaintance, for his notice. But, alas ! this was only to have the power of talking of her lovely absent friend ; a circumstance which, notwithstanding her affection, mortified her exceedingly. . . .

“Both the brothers are bewitched to-night,” I think, cried Arbella, as she at length poutingly seated herself at a little distance from her aunt; who, standing in the middle of a very fine gown, and “over that” a still finer “Indy shawl,” was pouring her complaints to “the idle” Sam Stockwell, upon her niece’s “unaccountable sort of behaviour.” In her most pathetic and querulous tone, she began, “Now, if I was to set my eyes upon sticks, I declare I can’t conceit what upon earth it is ails Arbella. It’s quite nonsical of her for to object to you, Sam, and this person, and that person, and keep on a wherretting of me and herself, as she has done all night. I’m sure, she’s had plenty and choice of nice partners.”

Sam, who was a little, or (as he thought himself) *not* a little genteel; and who had often entreated his mother to change her favorite phrase of “worretted,” or “wherretted,” to more fashionable “worried,” or still better, “annoyed,” now signified his displeasure at so improper an expression, by a dignified silence; while Mrs. Stockwell conti-

nued in the soliloquy to which she was thus condemned: "There's Lord Kilcare that she's had, who is better than Lord Strathallan, being an Earl in his own right, whereas t'other is only a Viscount by courtesy: and then she has had Strathallan himself, who is still better than his brother, Captain Fitzroy, who, let him give himself what airs he will, is no more than honourable: and the vulgarlest partner she has had all night is Sir Maurice Milward, K. B."

Mrs. Stockwell, as may have been observed, was, in her ideas of rank, rather Russian. It always required title, of some kind, to attract the honour of her notice. With her, a Colonel was somebody, a General was somebody, a Lord possessed her highest respect, and a Duke was almost above her veneration. But, low-born and low-bred herself, she had no idea of respecting the influence of birth or riches independently of title and station; and the whole race of Esquires were, without exception, the objects of her most unqualified contempt. She was also perfectly ignorant of that imaginary equality

which the customs of society create in good company. To hear her discourse, one would suppose that each of her distinguished friends moved in a little separate sphere or orbit of his own; in which the Duke might look down upon the Earl; the Earl might return the compliment to the Baron; while the Baron might revenge himself, by annihilating, with the most killing contempt, the poor Baronet, who should dare to approach him. "I assure you, Men," said she to Mrs. Harley, a lady who happily at this moment came within reach of her communications, "if my niece Arbella don't dance, it's not for want of partners. I'm sure, Miss Mountain would have been happy to have received half the attentions she has, from Lord Strathallan."

Mrs. Stockwell, in thus expressing herself, mistook Miss Mountain. It was not the attention of one, or of two persons more or less, that could disturb this lady's good opinion of herself, or the complete satisfaction with which she contemplated the plenitude of her own perfections. Her's was not that uneasy and tormenting thirst for applause,

which requires perpetual food to be administered to it from the admiration of others; it was rather that perfect complacency, that beatitude of vanity, which rests contented and all sufficing to itself. Miss Mountain was proud of her riches; she was proud of her birth (particularly by the mother's side); she was proud of her beauty; she was very proud of her learning; but, above all, she was proud of that dignified serenity and unruffled self-possession, which enabled her, as she imagined, to keep all this pride to herself.

Stockwell, determined to exchange his mother's lamentations for the company of his cousin Arbella, suddenly strutted close up to her, and said, "I hate these great assemblies, dear Coz—I'm not fond of the company of your fine people—they never know where they ought to bestow their attention; and nobody's comfortable. Oh, after all, a little snug party of friends is the thing; don't you think so?"

Arbella, roused by these observations from a deep reverie, in which far other objects than her cousin had taken possession of her

mind, started, looked at him from head to foot, and returned no answer; but perceiving that Sam, who thought he had made a great effort in putting so many words together, had taken his station behind her, silent and immovable (the usual way in which he expressed his admiration), she sought refuge by the side of Mrs. Stockwell, whom she endeavoured to persuade to leave the ball-room for the card or supper room. But to attract Mrs. Stockwell's attention was at that moment impossible. Her whole heart and soul were absorbed in her "re'el Indy shawl," which she had just missed, and which she was sadly "afear'd some awkward parson would set upon. Bless me! I can't conceive what I have done with it! Captain Fitzroy—Lord Strathallan—now do'ye look for my shawl—It's re'el Indy. I would not lose that shawl for more than I can say—I'm sure it cost me pounds and pounds, though I got it at the cheap shop."

Lord Strathallan (a thing very uncommon with him) was absent, and really did not hear her. Captain Fitzroy heard, but did

not think it necessary to give any indication that he did so.

“ Arbella, my love, did you see it?” continued the good lady, turning at length in despair to her niece. •

“ Oh! madam, you may depend upon it 'tis perfectly safe,” Miss Ferrars replied, with a sweet smile, and the air of one who had given the most satisfactory answer in the world; while, in reality, she had not the slightest idea of what her aunt had been talking about. Fortunately Mr. George Spring, the brother of Alcæus, the poet, came up, at this moment to Mrs. Stockwell's relief. This young gentleman, who has not yet been introduced into notice, was far from partaking of his brother's celebrity. They were the sons of an eminent hop-merchant in the neighbourhood, and owed their introduction into more fashionable circles to the amusive talents of the poet; in these scenes George merely served as a foil to Alcæus, being one of those mild, inoffensive, civil youths, alike destitute of conceit or consequence, who are suffered, by the ladies, to

glide unnoticed round a room, very quiet, very harmless, and very dull ; their services neglected, and their observations, if they ever venture to make any, unanswered. Some trifling civilities Arbella had shewn him during the course of the evening, had made him the most humble and attentive of her slaves. He had fluttered about her chair, had flown to procure her refreshment, spilt lemonade and orgèat upon her dress, and had in short done every awkward thing it was wrong for him to do, in the humble but heartfelt expression of the gratitude it was right for him to feel. With what readiness then did he offer his services in answer to Mrs. Stockwell's eager exclamation of " Oh George ! now do, there's a good creature, go and hunt about this room, and the supper-room, and the promenading-room, and see if you can get tale or tidings of my re'el Indy shawl ; for I'm very afraid some of them giddy girls or fellers have set upon it, and rumpled it."

George followed the route prescribed, brought back the shawl in triumph, and then asked, as a reward for his gallantry, the

honour of Miss Ferrar's hand the next time she should be inclined to dance. Arbella only replied by again urging Mrs. Stockwell to leave the room.—The company was beginning to move, but, by the injudicious haste with which all advanced towards the centre of attraction, the rush in the passage, to the supper-room, rendered unavoidably narrower by the odoriferous exotics that lined it on each side, was so great, that, for some moments it was very difficult either to advance or recede. This difficulty was increased by the *sang-froid* of Alcæus the poet, who, having picked up a *programme* of the *fête*, stood very quietly reading and commenting upon it, in the very midst of the crowd, unmindful of the efforts of those who, on either side, attempted to move or pass by him.

“For the love of goodness sake, Mr. Wholl-see-us,” cried Mrs. Stockwell, “don't ye think of stopping of us now, with the progress of the *fête*, or whatever it is you have got. Sure you can read it in the supper-room.”

Vain were her angry remonstrances, vain

were Miss Langrish's screams, and equally vain were Spencer's repeated and pressing instances that he would move "a little to his left," and "suffer them to extend their front;" or, his pathetic lamentations, as he was "*arming*" along his blooming partner, that he had no *guastadors** to clear the way for her. Absorbed in his studies, the immoveable hard kept his post; while poor Arbella found herself, by this means, squeezed in between Alcæus and her former admirer, and an unwilling spectator of the attentions he lavished on her rival. Really suffering beneath the effects of the increasing heat and pressure, Helen De Courcy was just able languidly to exclaim as he was busily employed sprinkling the fainting fair one with *Esprit de Rose*, "Enough, enough, Captain Fitzroy, I am almost drowned with sweets."

"Rather say refreshed—could I have foreseen what you were to endure," he continued in that tone of sportive tenderness

* Pioneers.

which often blended so pleasingly in his manners, "instead of one scanty *flacon*, a rill of perfumes should have run through these flowery shades for your sake."

"Could you do that too?—There I should doubt even Captain Fitzroy's magic."

"Did you never hear of the oriental princess, who, in an entertainment she gave her lover, contrived that a rivulet of rose water should sport in mazy windings through the grounds in which it took place?"

Romantic trifle! thought Arbella, as she again attempted to pass by him, but the sound of her own name, repeated by Miss De Courcy, arrested her attention, she listened, in breathless expectation, for the answer. Pretty! repeated Fitzroy, as if in reply to some observation of Helen's, and casting on Miss Ferrars a cold and careless glance, which strongly contrasted with the mingled softness and vivacity that marked his address to his partner; "That I cannot allow—*Une assez jolie mine de fantaisce* at most. My brother's attention to her this

evening, to be sure, will give her a little fashion, but—”

“ And what will Miss Melbourne say to that?” interrupted Helen, laughing maliciously; “ I thought Lord Strathallan was marked down as one of her host of adorers.”

“ Oh! no, no,” returned Spencer carelessly, “ my brother does not absolutely *belong* to the Melbourne service. Only *attached* for the present. Spencer loved to employ, in its tenderer sense, this phrase which his military habits rendered familiar to him. As for Arbella,” he continued, “ she took my mother’s fancy, who is always *ENGOUTÉE*; but I assure you, upon my honor, at Cheltenham, she was not at all admired—quite gone; extinguished, ‘*trailed off*’ before we left that place.”

“ Gone off! impossible; she is so young!”

“ Excuse me, not so young, according to my calculation. Arbella Ferrars must be four-and-twenty at least. ‘*Rising*’ four-and-twenty I mean.”

At this moment a party, conducted by Lionhart and a tall captain of grenadiers,

seemed determined to get on, in defiance of all the poets in the world. An opening in the crowd was forcibly effected ; and the indignant bard finding himself obliged to give way, exclaimed,

“ Enough for me : with joy I see
The different doom our fates assign.”

Darting a fierce look at the triumphant heroes, proceeded to the left, while they took the right, and hastened to cool the irritation this disturbance had excited, in draughts—not of pure Castalian dew, but of more inspiring Burgundy.

“ Come on now, Arbella,” cried Mrs. Stockwell, “ I did verily believe that little gentleman meant to have kept us here, poetizing all night.”

“ And what matter if he had, Madam?” returned Miss Ferrars very heroically, as she “trailed” after her aunt to the supper-room.

Spencer was in uncommonly brilliant spirits. He had, or (what was the same thing with him,) he imagined he had turned another female head that night ; and, on those

occasions his own was never perfectly composed. He found a delightful variety to his amusements in the gravity of Stockwell; and, whispering Miss De Courcy that "he would make him speak," he immediately began the attack. Though no great votary of the Muses, he mentioned a poet of the present day with the most enthusiastic praises, and asked his silent neighbour if he had read any of his works.

"No sir," Sam answered sulkily, "I never read any such stuff."

"Ask him if he has seen the new novel," said Helen, naming a popular romance; "no"—he "never looked at romances."

Miss De Courcy, who never liked the attention to be long taken from herself, attempted again to attract it by still affectedly complaining of heat and oppression.

"Surely 'tis the sound of these invisible choirs, amid groves and vernal airs," said Spencer, (alluding to the imitative strains of the concealed musician,) "that makes you almost fancy yourself under a July sun."

"A July sun when the thermometer is at 32; that's a good one," cried Sam.

"Oh now I have found out your studies," resumed Spencer, who well knew his friend's exactitude in trifles: "you read the Meteorological Report, and the Agricultural Report, and the Price of Stocks, in the newspaper. And the Kalendar, and the Gazetteer, and Moore's Almanack also, I make no doubt. Well, I am very fond of that sort of thing too, and have myself made a little Meteorological Journal for my own satisfaction."

"Indeed sir," said Stockwell, looking at him with an expression of more respect than he had hitherto shewn.

"It is not, however, suited to you, I believe," continued the Captain, "it is only an account of the meteors or stars of fashion, as they appear or set in the horizon. I have also framed a little thermometer upon it, to ascertain the state of my own heart. At the sight of a meteor of moderate pretensions, it rises to gentle

blood-heat: but on the appearance of a blazing beauty—”

“Oh! you dear meteorological creature,” cried Miss Langrish, affectedly interrupting him, “you must shew me this journal and thermometer of yours.”

“Assuredly, but I have promised it to Miss De Courcy first. You will not be offended, I hope,” he continued to that young lady in a whisper, “at the name I have placed at the head of my last observations.”

It was soon Arbella’s turn to triumph.—Just as they left the supper-room, Stockwell approached her, and requested, in a whisper, the pleasure of her hand for the two next *dances*. The two next, Arbella slowly repeated, looking at the unfortunate youth with the most killing contempt;

“Whilst I with Mab my partner DAUNCE,
Be little Mable thine.”

Spencer, who happened to overhear the dialogue, exclaimed with delight, “Good, good! excellent upon my soul,” and, repenting, or, as he phrased it, relenting with re-

spect to Arbella, he resolved, (to use his own expression,) "to reward her for quizzing that solid blockhead, and to punish Helen De Courcy for triumphing so much over *his* Arbella."

The amusement, however, in which the company was at present engaged, was of a nature so common and easy, that he would have thought his fine person quite thrown away upon it. He therefore preferred conversation; and, approaching Miss Ferrars, "You call these country-dances, don't you?" he said to her, "I have really been so long out of England, I hardly remember the name of them."

"You are not so very lately returned," replied Arbella, who began to be a little provoked, "you might have seen them at the Cheltenham balls."

"Oh you cruel creature, I was at Cheltenham, but then I was so ill, so very ill, I never went out at that time. Perhaps," he continued, "you, who are used to them, they may not strike in the same light; but, to me, with whom they have all the charm of

novelty, nothing can be more amusingly ridiculous than the whole arrangement.—Observe the dancers—how dull the sets! how ungraceful the figures! Sometimes going round in a ring, sometimes standing at four corners, in which you only miss one personage to make the resemblance to a certain infantine pastime complete. Sometimes running after each other as if they had taken a hint from another of the plays among children. Surely the whole school of hop-it, kick-it, and gig-it, is disowned by the Graces.

“*Slow melting strains their queen’s approach declare,*”

And abroad it is acknowledged. But here, a Miss Hautenville’s and a Miss Ferrar’s figure are on a level; talent and elegance, like her’s, are assimilated to the rustic agility of a dairy maid. Now there, every motion is calculated for the display of some thing of grace, dignity, or ease; every dance is a miniature ballet—”

“And every partner,” cried Arbella, soothed at length into resuming her native character, “is a flattering Fitzroy, by whom

we feel our resentment, however, justly excited, insensibly charmed away."

"Have a care, (said Spencer,) how you talk of flattery, lest envy, a sister vice, should start up *in propria persona*. I think I know her by the snaky locks," he continued, directing her attention to the pretty, little, straw-coloured visage of Miss Hautenville, which being adorned with a tolerable profusion of thick, black, screw curls, formed no bad representation of that passion, as, with eyes askance, and limbs disposed into an attitude of spider-like watchfulness, she viewed the graceful easy form of Spencer, while, in animated conversation, he remained by the side of Arbella, and treasured up in her mind many particulars to relate hereafter of "Miss Ferrars' excessively improper flirtation with Captain Fitzroy."

"Doubtless you dance," said the great Miss Mountian twisting round the little Miss Langrish, and fixing her large eyes upon her in expectation of an answer. Miss Langrish who, from causes over which she had no controul, had some doubts upon the subject,

replied, that she had not determined. : Perhaps Miss Langrish," resumed Miss Mountain, with her wonted formality, "you, as an institutrix of youth, despise this frivolous amusement, and would prefer the divine Tully's page."

"No indeed, Madam," returned the young lady, with great humility, "I never knew any but one page of the Backstairs."

"A page of Baxter's ! Oh, then you read divinity, I presume !"

"Madam !" cried Miss Langrish, who was now completely puzzled.

"You are aware of the author to whom I allude ; you perfectly comprehend my meaning, I hope," said Miss Mountain, smiling upon her with sweet complacency, for she was never so delighted as when by some of her ænigmas she had made herself quite incomprehensible. "But perhaps," she added, "the poets are by you preferred." "They are indeed," cried Miss Langrish, glad to have got, as she imagined, upon safer ground. "That Ode Mr. Alcæus repeated, I think a sweet thing—a very sweet

thing; and the strathspey about the battle quite pretty!"

"I see, Miss Langrish, you are thinking more of strathspeys than strophes," said Miss Mountain, and looking at her with a smile, compassionate, but not contemptuous in its expression, she left her to the enjoyment of her favorite pleasure, sitting with outstretched neck, eyes fixed, and head reclined in humble admiration of the graceful person and manly beauty of Lord Strathallan. It was just at this moment that Fitzroy had concluded his *tirade* against country dances, by requesting the honor of Arbella's hand for the next set. She hesitated, a consenting blush had stolen upon her cheek, when Miss Hautenville, who thought it a sin to neglect so favourable an opportunity of tormenting, put her head in between them, and said "of course you remember, Miss Ferrars, that if you dance any more to-night, it is to Mr. Spring you are engaged."

George approached; and Spencer observing how much his fair one was disconcerted

by this new *contre-temps*, undertook to divert its effects from her, and turning to the docile youth, "you see you cannot dance with Miss Ferrars," he said, "she has been engaged to me these three weeks; but I wonder, George, a man of your politeness did not think of asking Miss de Courcy, in preference, who, poor thing! is sitting out for want of a partner!"

"Dear heart!" cried Spring, emboldened by the notice of Fitzroy, who offered to introduce him, "I did think that certainly Miss Ferrars had engaged herself to me; but you know better, Captain Fitzroy; and if it ought to be Miss de Courcy, I'm sure I'm quite agreeable; the young lady herself did not appear to coincide in that opinion; but just as a refusal hovered on her lips, Arbella, running up to her, whispered in her ear, "If you refuse George Spring, my dear, his brother Alcæus will bring you into his next satire. It is no matter, you know," she added, "I only thought it right to tell you of it."

When the company began to retire, several

unexpected and amusing scenes took place. To the enquiries made by many a silver voice of "Where's my tippet? Where's my veil?" "Bless me, Louisa, what did I do with my cloak?" no satisfactory answer was for some time returned; till, at length, all these various articles of wearing apparel were found upon the person of Captain Lionhart, who, completely disguised in the head dress of one, the veil of another, and the mantle of a third, seemed extremely unwilling to part with his trophies. Restitution at length being made, the Countess, with a graceful and somewhat *queen-like* curtesy, led the way. Captain Fitzroy saw the happy party that accompanied her safely seated in the barouche; and then, mounting the box with spirit unwearied and masterly expedition and skill, drove them back, as the sun began to rise, to Woodlands.

CHAP. XV.

“ Le plaisir de la critique nous ôte celui d'être vivement touché de très-belles choses.

LA BRUYÈRE.

WELL these balls are terrible things, cried Arbella, as she woke still dizzy with the events of the evening; and the conversation of her fair visitants who met to “talk them over,” did not much tend to disperse the chaos. “Lord, Louisa, why did you dance with that odious man?” “Bless me, Maria, how could I help it; he asked me half a hundred times.” “And I would have refused him half a thousand before I would have been seen in the same set with him. I wonder for my part people are not ashamed to be so ugly.” “Who do you mean? are

you talking of the man with the legs?" "No, my dear, I'm speaking of the man with the head." "But dearest Julia why did you take ice after dancing so much?" "I don't know; Lord Strathallan asked me to take it, and I did not think at the moment; besides, we should really not have been warm, but for that old cross dowager Lady Pthisick, who quarrelled with Lionhart for opening the windows." "Yes, and with de Millefleurs for having perfumes." "And with Sabredash for making a noise; though I am sure he did not make as much as she did with her cough." "No, indeed, if instead of shutting the windows, he had thrown her out of them, he would only have served her right, and Mrs. Early, Miss Gaylife's chaperon after her." "One might as well stay at home as go out with such a woman." "Instead of keeping it up, the moment one has begun to get into the spirit of it, she rises with her odious, 'don't you think it is growing late?'" "But why did not Bellairs dance all night?" "How could he when he never asked any one?" "Did he expect us to ask him?"

"I really believe he did; and I do think we did not pay him sufficient attention."

With such conversation they endeavoured to recel the fast-fading pleasures of the evening, while Arbella, who at once gave into, and despised, the nonsense that surrounded her, occasionally threw in a word; secure that even in her sleep she could talk at least as well as the busy and wakeful tongues that hummed about her. "After all, ladies," she interrupted indolently, "you must allow that everything went off vastly well,

"Want, with her babes,
Round generous valour clung."

in most affecting style; and Lord Strathallan "all delighting and delighted," was quite in his element."

"Lord Strathallan was not so attentive, I think, as his situation required," replied one young lady; who, though she had not quite taken in the force of the first allusion, perfectly comprehended the observation that followed it, "had he remembered the rules of politeness."

“ Rules of politeness ! ” exclaimed an enthusiastic fair one, who had till now been silent, “ he needs them not. Strathallan, the lovely Strathallan, is alone beyond them all, and pleases most when most transgressing them ! he is the Shakespeare of love’s legionaries ; but Miss Ferrars,” she continued, after this eloquent apology for his Lordship’s negligent discharge of the duty of steward for the evening, “ how polite his brother was to every one, and how I pitied you when, instead of him, Miss Hautenville brought up dear little master Spring. Excuse me, but I cannot help laughing to think of it ; and really the look with which you seemed to implore her to take it away, was enough to have disarmed a savage ! and Miss Ferrars, when you *did* stand up, how could you be so unthinking as to call ‘ *The Old Woman behind the Fire* ’ when Lady Kilcare and her son were dancing in the same set ? ”

Rather piqued at the pertness of these remarks, Arbella was not sorry the entrance of Mrs. Stockwell put an end to them. The

Misses primmed up, for they perceived that this lady, angry and wearied with having "stopped up all night," as she called it, was prepared to regale them with one of her pathetic lamentations, which they were not just then in a humor to hear, they therefore soon after took leave.

A few days had passed, and Matilda wholly engrossed in the performance of her filial duties, had almost forgotten the ball, when it was recalled to her remembrance by a visit from Lord Strathallan. He had been some time with Mr. and Mrs. Melbourne, before she appeared. It was with an alteration, an added tenderness of voice and manner, (she in vain tried not to remark) that, turning to her, he inquired after her health, and expressed the disappointment, that on the night of the ball he had experienced. He had been absent from home the whole of that morning; and had, therefore, to the last, flattered himself with hopes that Lady Torrendale might have prevailed on her to change her mind.

"She might have gone," said Mr. Melbourne, who had by this time been made to comprehend that young ladies *liked* balls, "I was rather desirous that she should; but I do not know how it was, she really preferred staying at home with me."

Lord Strathallan gazed upon her as her father spoke; it was not that glance of quick, yet soft surprise, which, at their first meeting had communicated itself like lightning to her heart; it was a look tender, long indulged, of the fondest interest, and admiration. Strathallan had never appeared so amiable to her before, yet she felt that she never had less regretted not meeting him at the ball. Two hours had passed, and to the peaceful group, had hardly appeared so many moments. It was not that any thing of importance had been discussed, but every thing that was said derived a charm from the consciousness of each, that it was heard with interest, with sympathy, and friendship. This intercourse of the heart, this perfect confidence, this feeling of given and received delight, possessed a soothing, a tranquilizing

sweetness, which more extended or brilliant societies, can never boast. It was, indeed, the music of the mind; one of those golden hours of life, when, for the moment, every wish is satisfied, and no fear, no regret intrudes, but that it cannot last for ever. 'Twas thus Matilda thought, 'twas thus she felt, when at that instant, the charm was broken; Strathallan rose, and, resuming the subject that had been the cause of his visit, he turned to Mrs. Melbourne with persuasive grace, "Am I the bearer of good news to Lady Torrendale?"

"Such a party would be peculiarly agreeable to me, but ———," She looked at Matilda, and Matilda, at the mention of another invitation, with anxious solicitude at her father.

"You must go my love," he said, "I may be considerably better by next week. This is nothing of late hours or gaiety to make you unwilling to leave me, and yet I think it would be a thing highly improving and amusing to Matilda."

This last consideration determined Mrs. Melbourne; and, it was at length agreed, that

if Mr. Melbourne's state of health did not grow worse, the ladies would certainly attend on Tuesday, or as Spencer phrased it, "assist" at Lady Torrendale's literary party. Lord Strathallan took leave, very much pleased with the success of his mission, which had been partly forced on him by Lady Torrendale. The history of this conversazione "threatened oft, and oft deferred," was sufficiently curious.

The jealousy of rival wits is more cruel than the enmity between courtiers, lovers, or even, beauties. "Alcæus repeats nonsense so well, that people mistake it for sense," was Sappho's obliging remark, when she heard of the applause the young poet had obtained by his Ode, at the subscription ball. To this Alcæus had, with equal politeness and readiness, replied that Sappho, on the contrary, repeated sense in such a manner that every one took it for nonsense. The observation of the bard, as alluding to her famous recitation of the Ode on the Passions, piqued the vanity of the poetess, and she defied him to prove his charge. She urged Lady Lynd-

hurst to remember her promise of introducing her to the Countess. Lady Lyndhurst who equally patronised these rival sygnets, consented. At Lady Torrendale's they were to meet, and there Alcæus was to be convinced, that Sappho could do justice to her author. Great interest was made to prevail on Mr. Sowerby, (whose literary and scientific reputation had reached the ears of the Countess) to honor the proposed assembly with his presence, but without effect.

At this party Lady Lyndhurst took the opportunity of introducing her own daughter, the honorable Miss De Courcy. The young lady from the celebrity of her mother, was already considered, by the profane, as a candidate for literary honors, or, in more familiar language, as a blue-elect. If the initiated, on the contrary, did not perceive in the lovely Helen any remarkable tendency that way, still they were forced to acknowledge she was very pretty, very modest, and cast up a pair of blue eyes, (which possessed every charm, but meapng) in rapturous admiration, whenever Lady Lyndhurst, or Mrs.

Melbourne spoke. To the manners and conversation of that lady and her daughter, she was exhorted to pay particular attention. A recommendation that was, to Matilda, the only disagreeable circumstance in her occasional intercourse with Miss De Courcy; as it laid the foundation of a jealousy and ill-will, which, though it did not break out till afterwards, was not the less deep-rooted in her bosom. In other respects, Helen was a most docile scholar; though, perhaps, had she felt courage honestly to avow her inclinations, she would, at any time, have preferred to a literary circle, the amusement of playing domino, or even push-pin with Lady Emily; or coronella, (she was too indolent for shuttlecock) with her more fascinating brother.

Miss Hautenville, proud of the share she had in promoting the party, "had brought" Mrs. Stockwell, on a whispered injunction, that she should not "Speak, to expose herself." Miss Ferrars, though disdaining thus to appear in Miss Hautenville's train, could not resist the prospect of amusement such an assembly afforded; and joined the party

prepared, as occasion should serve, equally to shine, to be silent, or to laugh. Alcæus, himself, was not without a *protégé*; having begged leave to introduce his younger brother George Spring. In Mrs. Melbourne, the vivacity and talent of Aspasia Villiers seemed only to wait calling forth in order to revive; while the warmth and ingenuousness of Matilda, alive to every new impression of improvement or delight, formed, in itself, a different, yet, perhaps, equally pleasing recommendation. To settle the different pretensions of her visitors was not found, by the Countess, so easy a task as she had, at first, imagined. Lady Torrendale, who at a ball, or a dinner party, valued herself upon assorting her guests, and who really excelled in the little observances that impart to such meetings their gaiety and ease, thought she could not do better than place the two poets, Sappho and Alcæus, next to each other. Now, beside the grievous subject of complaint that the wit of Alcæus, in conversation, had recently given her, it happened that, but two months before,

he had, in one of the Magazines, attacked the grammatical accuracy of an elegy of Sappho's; and that Sappho, in the ensuing number, had designated an Ode of Alcæus by the unparliamentary term "sad stuff." Her Ladyship, who never looked either into Magazine or Review, was surprised and disconcerted to see the two Luminaries, on a near approach to each other, turn pale in their orbits; and then, alternately, flash fire. Miss Langrish, the gentle mediator, at length succeeded in separating them, yet still the ease that should have prevailed in such a meeting was not restored. The Countess felt ashamed to lead; and those whose habits better qualified them for such a task, seemed to fear nothing more than to "commit themselves," by saying something which their wiser companions would have disdained to utter. Such was the state of parties, while tea and refreshments were handed about.

At length Arbella, creeping over to Matilda on tip-toe, as if afraid to disturb the horrid silence, whispered: "An't we very

doll? I had something very brilliant to say just now ; but it could not stand this dreadful atmosphere. It was frozen, like the words spoken by Sir John Mandeville and his crew, before it could reach you. Oh ! I see what we want ; Miss Mountain, the soul of our miniature world, is not here ; and Miss Hautenville has set her neck on one side in the Alexandrian twist, and given her eye the admiring roll in vain. There is nothing to admire !”

The entrance of the lady, thus regretted, formed a pleasing break in the formality of the circle. She slightly apologized for the lateness of her appearance, declaring that she had been so engaged, in her own apartment, with “ a Tome of Bacon,” that she knew not how to quit it.

“ Bacon !” cried Mrs. Stockwell, “ why mine has been all saved a month ago.”

“ My dear Mrs. Stockwell, did not you promise me,” whispered Miss Hautenville, gasping for breath.

“ I usually breakfast on a page of Young,

and sup on a 'Tome of Bacon," resumed Miss Mountain, with great *sang froid*.

The restraint, in which the company was held, being once broke through, each began to speak freely of the pleasure they expected to receive; and to hope Miss Swanley would not long delay the promised recitation. Miss Mountain talked of the *Melopée* of the ancients, (as she called it) and then said she trusted Miss Swanley would add the charms of appropriate music, at intervals, to her declamation.

"The Ancients Madam," interrupted the Poet Alcæus, "I hope they are not to give rules to us. They knew little of the resources of Poetry; still less of the secrets of the Arts."

"Yet you must allow that, in most branches of literature, they are our masters," said Lady Lyndhurst, "in the drama, particularly the Greeks."

"Surely Madam," resumed Alcæus, "you do not think we derive any advantage from the unnatural plots, cold monotonous scenes,

and tiresome declamations of the Greek stage! take my word for it, were they to write now, Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides are fellows who would not be so much as heard of."

"Certainly," observed Lady Lyndhurst, "they knew little of the art of moving the passions, compared to our own dear Shakespeare."

"Shakespeare," interrupted our young critic, "has some fine scenes, and was fortunate in the conjuncture in which he lived: but Shakespeare, with his nonsense, his puns, and his anachronisms; his blunders, historical, geographical, and chronological, together with his vile mixture of tragedy and farce, would, in these days, be absolutely hissed off the stage. Otway sometimes commands our pity; Rowe's language is harmonious; but he is cold, affected, and declamatory; besides that the tone of morals is so low you really hesitate whether to laugh or cry."

"The times in which Otway and Rowe flourished," said Mrs. Melbourne, "seemed more favorable to the cultivation of wit, than

the expansion of genius and sentiment. In the days of Charles and Anne—”

“ Wit!” exclaimed Alcæus, who could not bear longer to be silent; “ there was an absolute stagnation of it. Dryden himself, whose name appears, at first, the most conspicuous, what did he write, but bombastic plays, or forgotten satires; and every one knows that his *Æneis*, as he calls it—”

“ *Æneas!*” cried George, eagerly; “ if that’s the *Æneas* that wrote Virgil, I’ll answer, for one, that *he’s* not forgotten.—Many’s the good——”

A look from his brother silenced him; and Alcæus proceeded—“ And what, I beg, was that celebrated constellation of wits, in Queen Anne’s time, that they should arrogate to their æra the title of the Augustan age of England? Gay wrote an opera, that is not fit to be read; Pope published translations; and Swift, political pamphlets: the rest, not worth a thought, a name.”

“ My dear little Alcæus,” cried Miss Mountain; looking down “ from her amazing height,” with an air and voice of very par-

donable apprehension and pity, at the juvenile critic.

"I have often thought," said Mrs. Melbourne, who really considered it as charity to turn the attention from his absurdity, "that the present period affords a richer poetical harvest than that of which we are speaking; and that when my Lord Oxford is supposed to ask of Swift,

"Have you nothing new to-day,
From Pope, from Parnell, or from Gay?"

we could fill the spaces they now occupy, with at least equally illustrious names."

"Why, there I must beg leave to differ from you again," resumed the inexorable bard. "We have some poets, to be sure, that are popular; but none, in my humble opinion, that deserve to be so. Those ballad-romances, for instance, that you ladies like, really to a classic ear—"

"Classic!" cried Sappho; "I thought, Mr. Spring, just now you disowned that school. But perhaps 'tis to the splendor of the modern fictions you object, and you prefer those

poets whose genius can embellish the humblest scenes in real life."

"Real life! Oh, detestable! Pray do not bring us back to the Seasons and the Deserted Village,"

"Ah, that was a charming thing!—written by Goldsmith, you know," said Miss Hautenville, looking round to be applauded for the discovery she had made.

"No, no," continued Alcæus, "give me none of your Georgics, nor Cowper's Task;—I'm sure it's a task to read them"—(here he laughed very loud); "nor metrical imitations of the Arabian Nights; nor itineraries of travels put into verse; nor songs, nor sonnets, nor modern odes—I'm sick of modern odes; nor——"

"Any thing, in short, but the works of Alcæus," murmured Arbella.

"I think you mentioned sonnets, Mr. Spring," said Miss Mountain, turning to the poet with great solemnity: "I hope you mean to except from your wide-sweeping censure the Sydneys and Surreys, the charming sonneteers of Elizabeth's time. The mo-

dern writers, I will admit, may have degenerated; but there is, in all the works of those bards, a refinement and intricacy of expression, a delicate and elegant mysticism in the ideas which is, in my opinion, very charming. There is a poem of Sir Philip's, 'Astrophel and Stella sweet,' which would perfectly illustrate my meaning. If I recollect right it is not above a hundred and fifty stanzas: but as that might possibly be considered rather too long, I shall for the present content myself with repeating the eight first lines of his 'Dactyls,' another exquisite performance:—

“ ‘ Who hath his fancy pleas’d
With fruits of happy sight,
Here let his sight be rais’d
On nature’s sweetest light.
A light which doth dis sever,
And yet unites the eyes;
A light, which, dying never,
Is cause the looker dies.’ ”

I am far from wishing, however, to depreciate the efforts of later bards. That divine poet, whose finest ode Miss Swanley will

favor us with to-night, is a proof how far genius may soar. There is another ode of his, that on the poetic character, which I always thought unequalled. Are you not of my opinion, Miss Melbourne?" turning suddenly to Matilda, who had, till now, modestly refrained from joining in the conversation.

"I—I—yes, Madam—I certainly think it a very fine thing," she replied, after a moment's pause, and with an air of constraint and coldness, rendered more remarkable by the spirit and ingenuousness of her usual manner.

"I believe I can explain that start—that charming hesitation," Strathallen whispered to Matilda. "You really admire that beautiful poem, which is one of the touchstones of true taste; and, for that very reason, on suddenly hearing it warmly commended by one you suspect to be incompetent to appreciate its real merit, you experience, for your favourite author, the sentiment expressed by the Portuguese bard for his mistress; when he declares he prefers his

secret adoration, to the danger of suffering even praise, that might be unworthy of her, too lightly to trifle with that sacred name."

Matilda made no other reply than by a look, bright with sweetness and intelligence, a look that seemed to say, "*Vous m'avez deviné.*"

Strathallan, encouraged by that look, proceeded—"I observed you smile too at some extravagant encomiums that were bestowed upon our earlier poets; yet, believe me, they are not unworthy of your attention. They often possessed the language of nature more than their successors. Surrey was at once a poet and—" (he sighed) "a lover. I wish you were acquainted with his works."

In this manner, Strathallan, charmed to discover in Matilda a character that was equally, in trifles and matters of importance, in unison with his own, applied himself to draw out the latent feeling and intelligence that adorned the mind of this amiable girl; till, finding himself but too successful, and that her conversation was in danger of taking him completely off from those claims that he too

painfully felt might be urged by others, he suddenly checked himself, and gazing with passionate earnestness on her enchanting face, "Cease! Nymph of the Danube!" he exclaimed; and, abruptly turning from her, left Miss Melbourne in a state of uneasiness she could hardly moderate or conceal, at the strangeness and apparent caprice of this unintelligible expression.

Miss Ferrars, who had not been so interestingly engaged, and who regretted the impertinent conversation that seemed destined to supply the place of her promised amusement, could hardly refrain from whispering, "What nonsense!—how insupportable Alcæus is to-night! What would Spencer say?"—when the beloved hero himself made his appearance.

Sappho, who had, for her own reasons, purposely delayed the recitation till that moment, now required but few entreaties to begin. A short prelude from the flute was heard. Lady Torrendale, by a sign, commanded silence; and in a moment all was mute attention, except on the part of Lion-

hart, who having, as well as his friend, spent the day abroad, and returned without knowing what was to be the order of the night, seemed absolutely terrified by this exordium; "Hey! what have we got here?—a conversation party! You did not tell me of that, Fitzroy!" he continued, turning reproachfully to his friend. "We must be all very wise, must not we?"

"No, not all," returned Spencer in the same under-tone. "Come, come, Lionhart, we must have you one of us; upon my soul, my dear fellow, we must. I long to enrol you among the Royal Derbyshire Blues—Lady Lyndhurst's own."

Alcæus, perceiving symptoms of discontent on Lionhart's countenance, thought this a fine opportunity of making him an unconscious abettor of the design he meditated; and began whispering in his ear a series of criticisms on the poem, which he thought would end in turning the repeater of it into ridicule. She had just arrived at these two lines,—

"Exulting, trembling, raging, fainting,
Possess'd beyond the Muse's painting."

when he exclaimed, "Was there ever, in such a small compass, crowded together such a quantity of bombastic frenetic stuff? But Fear, it seems, when he tried his hand at it,

" ' Back recoil'd he knew not why.' "

Oh, truly, Mr. Fear, I could tell you the why and the wherefore, if it were not already much better explained; it was

" ' Ev'n at the sound himself had made; "

and really, if poor Fear had had any modesty, such sounds were enough to have terrified any body. But some people" (glancing insolently at Sappho) "think their own music must always be delightful."

By this time, the suppressed smile and smothered laugh, produced by these remarks, which, though contemptible enough in themselves, were received with pleasure by some, as flattering the favourite propensity in the human mind to bring down superiority, of whatever description, to its own level, began to be very distressing to poor Sappho. Spencer perceived it; and, actuated partly

by his general gallantry to the sex, partly by his own turn for elegant raillery, resolved, that if Alcæus was determined to continue, it should end with his completely exposing himself. Whispering Lionhart (to keep him quiet) that he meant to quiz the poet, he turned to Mr. Spring, and, professing himself much informed and amused by his criticisms, complimented him on the courage that could venture to oppose such generally received prejudices.

“Why, yes, Sir,” returned the juvenile bard, swallowing the bait with prodigious complacency, “I flatter myself, I am not one of those who can be daunted by the splendor of a name: and I will engage to prove, to any one who will take the trouble of listening to me, that a more contemptible cento, under the name of a poem, was never palmed upon the indulgence of the public.” He then continued, giving his little nose, as he went on, the true Zoilus curl:

“ ‘Twas sad by fits, by starts ’twas wild;”

a most exact definition, in one line, of this

absurd farrago, miscalled an ode; which is not more defective from the variety of subjects it embraces, than from the eternal changes in the metre. For where is the pleasure of discovering the resources of the poet's art—the *difficulté vaincue*, if he may swim, hop, or jig it away, just as he finds it convenient?

“ ‘ But thou, O Hope! with eyes so fair.’ ”

Alcæus had almost run himself out of breath, yet was proceeding, in the same strain of remark, upon this stanza, without observing that Lionhart, till now one of his most attentive listeners, had turned from him, and was whispering his friend, in apparently great agitation, “ Oh, Spencer! it is all over with me. Going, going, going; in a moment or two it will be gone!”

“ Nonsense! what will be gone?”

“ My poor heart.”

“ Pray, pray,” resumed Spencer, in the same under-tone, “ do not let me have a love-fit. You know I shall have to nurse you, and I really have not time. There—

turn your eyes in some other direction, and do not stand gazing (transfixed like a statue) at a girl who is not thinking of you."

The object that had given rise to this singular dialogue was Matilda; who, all unknowing of her charms, and thinking of any thing rather than securing a conquest, bent forward, rapt in listening, mute attention, by the beauties of a poem, which she had often perused in private, with renewed delight; but which she enjoyed still more, when set off with those graces of delivery that Sappho knew so well how to give it. But when the glowing Sappho, with all the energy inspired by the subject, repeated the last line in that beautiful personification—

"And Hope, enchanted, smiled, and wav'd her golden hair,"

Matilda caught her enthusiasm; and, involuntarily imitating the action described, gracefully raised, with her white hand, the flowing ringlets on her neck.

"Fitzroy! I can resist no more," whispered Lionhart. "What beauty! what ele-

gance! Heavens! what a neck! and how those waving curls, that seem powdered with gold, increase the vivid glow of her cheek, and the charm of that wrinkle that sinks into its crimson surface! Deep, rich carnation—how does its changing, increasing beauty, deaden the effect of Miss Mountain's confounded paint!"

"Well, don't grow so loud—Upon my soul I won't allow it, Lionhart—I'm quite ashamed of you."

While that passion, which inspires the slowest with eloquence, had betrayed poor Lionhart (who was, of all heroes, the most susceptible) into this rhodomontade,—very different were the feelings with which the poet Alcæus, who conceived that the hour of his complete triumph was arrived, in the remarks that he was about to make, commented upon the passage he had just heard. "Now, I should be glad to know the opinion of the company with respect to the expression

" ' Eyes so fair.' "

Fair is white ; so it comes to the same as if he had said,

“ O Hope, with eyes so white.

Now white eyes were never particularly admired, that I heard. I have seen a notable poem, on the death of a great person, which says—

“ ‘ The aldermen with fair eyes
Followed him to Mary’s.’

But whether that is a precedent, or that the writer borrowed the hint from Mr. Collins, I cannot determine.

“ ‘ And wav’d her golden hair.’

What cursed nonsense ! he might say, that she had wavy hair, or that her hair had a wave in it ; but that she waved her own hair !—he might just as well say “ waved her golden wig ;” nobody joining in the laugh, he would have been quite discouraged, but for the approving nods and smiles of Spencer ; who, while he dexterously contrived to expose, to all around him, the vanity and inability of the little critic, encour-

raged him, every moment, still more conspicuously to display his folly. He was now arrived at the personification of melancholy.

"Well done Mrs. Melancholy! I have heard lately of ladies playing the flute; in the last generation, your Euterpes' excelled on the viol. I have heard even of women fiddlers. But my poet here determined to out-Herod Herod, makes you

"Pour through the mellow horn the pensive sound."

I congratulate you Mrs. Melancholy upon your proficiency in blowing the French horn. Never heard before of such an instrument for a lady; never did, may I be shot! did you, Captain Lionhart?"

"Ask Fitzroy," said Lionhart, who began to be a little tired, "it may be very pretty, and very right, for aught I know, I am no judge of poetry and that sort of thing; Fitzroy, I believe, has all the books that are in the regiment."

"For shame," replied his friend, "you know I never have a moment's time to read.

Besides reading is quite unfashionable, and I think it the greatest bore upon earth, except for such a thing as this, or *POUR PASSER LE TEMPS.*"

"Don't believe him," resumed Lionhart, addressing himself to the poet, "trust me he knows more than either of us, and could cap Latin with you as fast as—"

"What do you think of this passage, describing Chearfulness," said Spencer to Alcæus, desirous of turning the discourse; for, though really an elegant scholar, such was the frivolity he thought proper to assume, that he had a vanity in avoiding the imputation of knowledge. "Think sir! Oh I can only think to be sure that chearfulness, with

" ' Her bow across her shoulder hung,

Her buskins gemmed with morning dew.'

Is a fine bouncing lass. Perhaps no one has ever reflected that all this dew and jemmy boots only means, in plain English, that she got her feet wet, or was wet-footed as they say in Sussex."

"Admirable sir! You make me see the passage quite in a new light."

The bard was not a little elated by the elegant Fitzroy's praise : but, perceiving it was not followed by the universal applause he expected, he turned somewhat more sourly to his task, and, at length, exclaimed, " Oh here comes ' something pretty,' as the ladies say,

" ' Last came Joy's extatic trial.'

And really, master Collins, so we come to the last of it, in any shape, I believe there is nobody who cares much, how.

" ' He with viny crown advancing,
First to the lively pipe his hand addressed,
But soon he saw the brisk awakening viol.'

What does this mean, but that joy, having got very tipsey, sent for a blind fiddler, gave him sixpence, and then danced, while he played him a tune." Nothing is so flat and abortive as ridicule, which is not immediately taken as it is meant. Where others do not feel inclined to sympathize, it recoils with double force upon itself. Alcæus found he was deserted, one by one, by his whole auditory, who had crowded round Sappho, to

whom they were now pouring forth praises on her performance; every one of which acted as a sting upon the irritable vanity of the poet. As he was, however, one of that happy class of beings, denominated self-listeners, and could always supply to himself, in a degree, the admiration which he might want from without, he continued his harangue, with tolerable complacency, 'till Spencer interrupted him, exclaiming, "Bravo! you have completely opened our eyes as to the absurdity of the piece we have so long foolishly admired; but, poet, your work is but half done. To make the lesson useful, you must, after demonstrating in what the ridiculous consists, also give us an example of what constitutes excellence: and of this, if I am not much mistaken, your own Ode to the Gossamer affords the most perfect model. Let any one only repeat the second stanza, and I think, my assertion will be put out of doubt."

"Agreed," returned Alcæus, delighted with the proposal; "let any one of these ladies," he continued triumphantly, "repeat

the second stanza of my ode, and then I submit myself, without fear, to the decision of the court. Miss Hautenville, perhaps you will favour me so far."

"I—me!" said Miss Hautenville, vexed that her own work on the Italian Drama had never been called for. "Mr. Spring I always admired your charming Ode to Gossamer, and all your odes; but I don't know how it is, I have been so much engaged of late that at this instant it is not very present to my mind. Miss Mountain, I dare say you could."

"My memory is, I am sorry to say, the pitcher of the Danaïdes," replied the stately lady, "but, I doubt not, Lady Torrendale could."

"Lady Torrendale," turning formally to her, "you subscribed to Mr. Spring's poems; surely you can remember his Ode to the Gossamer."

"I—yes," replied her ladyship, suppressing a yawn, "I did subscribe to them."

"But she did not think herself obliged to

read them," said Arbella, in a half-whispered *ASIDE*.

"I beg you will not call upon me," continued the Countess, "my poor head retains nothing."

"But it did contain the whole ode;" pursued the indefatigable Arbella, heedless of Mrs. Stockwell's repeated "nudges," and the apprehensive tone in which she whispered, "for shame, for shame niece, to tell. Did you ever see me do so."

"Last night," she continued, to her next neighbour, "the little smartly bound volume was promoted, from its post in the window, where it has been tost about this month, to have its nice foolscap pages converted into *PAPILLOTES* for her ladyship's hair." [*A pause ensued.*]

"Deuced unlucky—no one able to repeat my Ode to Gossamer—confounded awkward, may I be shot!" muttered Alcæus, ending with a wish, which was a favourite one with him, perhaps, from the little probability of its ever being realized.

"Really very extraordinary," continued Spencer, affecting surprise, "that no one should remember this charming ode, nor the Ode to the Grasshopper, that would do just as well.—Miss Hautenville, Miss Mountain, perhaps you could repeat me part of the Ode to the Grasshopper."

"Pray Miss Hautenville repeat some of the Ode to the Grasshopper," said Miss Mountain, "I cannot remember it."

"Pray Miss Langrish do you," whispered the lady, sending the commission round.

"Dear me ma'am! I know nothing about it I am sure," returned the young governess, "Miss Ferrars can you?"

"Who, I?" answered Arbella aloud; "I never heard of it."

The conclusion to be drawn from this experiment was obvious. The boasted triumphs of modern wit were unknown and disregarded, even by the small circle that effected to patronize them; and the laugh, that Arbella began, extended itself, like electricity, along

the line, 'till even the marble muscles of Miss Mountain threatened to give way. Spencer, satisfied with what he had done, took no share in the general mirth; but, retiring to a window, at the end of the room, with his friend Captain Lionhart, stood, with him, (while it continued,) in a graceful attitude, apparently engaged in the most interesting and animated conversation. Poor George Spring, on the contrary, who had sat, in admiration of his brother's wit, 'till he was more tired than he chose to acknowledge, was only roused from the stupor into which it had plunged him, by a call to supper. While Fitzroy secured a place next to Matilda, Lionhart consoled himself for the past, by some plentiful slices of a wild-fowl pasty; after a proportionable number of libations of champagne, to the goddess of his soul, he thought himself a match, even for the conquering Captain, and determined not to leave the field entirely to him.

He began by lamenting, "she came so little among them," and declared that he had found the ball the cursedest bore on earth

without her. "I am beginning to like reading a great deal better," he said, "for I have not seen you, a whole evening together, for an age before. I thought it would have been something very stupid; but, wherever you have good company, and good supper, and fine women, call it a rout, or an assembly, or a *conversazione*, or what you will, it is equally good I think."

He then poured forth a volley of compliments, which, however exaggerated, were not the less sincere. But Spencer, who secretly smiled at his confidence, in venturing to cope with him, and was resolved to point out his friend's prevailing foible in its most ridiculous light, said to Matilda, "You must know, Madam, this gentleman is sadly subject to the malady of falling in love. I call it a malady, because it is a kind of flying pain, an uneasiness that comes upon him by fits, so sudden, yet so transient, that it would be vain to listen to his suit; for, before the lady could possibly have settled her mind, he would, most indubitably, have changed his, at least a dozen times. For instance, in the

last town where we were quartered, he had, to my certain knowledge, four *grandes passions*. The first was for a lady's Turkish slipper—'Oh Miss Wingfield's Turkish slipper!'—Cinderella's was but a *sabot* compared to it. He was just going to take the leap, when, *heureusement* he met a lady, in the public walk, moving gracefully along. She had a ridicule—poor Frank had a heart—you may easily suppose they were soon exchanged; or rather, I should imagine, she popt his heart into her ridicule; for, certain it is, for a week it was gone astray. We advised a cry, as the only thing. You remember Miss Dashwood's crimson and gold ridicule, hey Frank?"

"Well," interrupted Lionhart, half angry, though pretty well accustomed to his friend's raillery, "When I *do* fall in love, at least it is sincerely, not like—"

"The next *belle passion*," pursued Spencer, thinking it better not to let his friend conclude the sentence, "was excited by harmony, heavenly harmony. He was with me at a party; a young lady was singing—

Oh why will ladies sing? or why will officers listen?—Poor Frank's heart was not proof against Miss Poyntz's singing Robin Adair. The last, and most serious of his passions, was raised by a hat and feather, at a review. The lady was very pretty—the wind was very high—it blew her white ostrich feather over her face, so that she could not see any thing. She put it back, with the whitest hand, and discovered beneath it the finest eyes: to replace a wandering curl, or a waving feather, with a fair hand, is a most graceful action;" (he continued, turning on Matilda a penetrating glance,) then pursuing his story, "Lionhart felt it so.—In the evening he attended her to the ball. The figure of the first dance was difficult; it could not be, you know, that the young lady was stupid—Lionhart had the pleasure of being her instructor; and she looked down with a modest blush, for she blundered through the whole set; only think how pretty! she blundered through the whole set. Now, had she danced tolerably, it would have been nothing. But this pretty ignorance and confusion was so 'in-

te-REST-ing,' it banished the Turkish slipper, the Ridicule, and Robin Adair, from his heart, or his head, for ever. I have known him, upon my soul, fall in love with a Spanish girl, or a Jewess, I declare I forget which, for her false English; and with a nun, for the elegance of her cross and rosary."

"I should think such attachments not very dangerous," said Matilda, smiling at the ludicrous point of view in which the Captain had placed the "PASSIONCELLI" of his friend.

"I do not know," returned Spencer in a softened voice; and instantly assuming a milder air, "in my opinion, a man is happy who can thus lightly receive, and lose an impression;" then, sighing, and after a pause, in which he seemed to have called up at once into his eyes and countenance, all their most expressive and dangerous power, he turned to her, and added, with earnestness, and in a still lower tone, "for my own part I *feel* it is not a passion to be trifled with; and that an attachment, excited in a moment,

by a charmer, perhaps unconscious of her power, may decide the happiness or misery of my whole future life."

Matilda looked down, the Captain withdrew his eyes, quite satisfied that they had done their duty : and the young lady smiled to think how little was supposed sufficient to ensnare her. Meantime Lionhart, who, as the night advanced, had only become disposed to be more communicative, took advantage of Fitzroy's attention being called off, to open to his fair lady the whole of his mind and thoughts. It was now Spencer's turn to be described : and the kindness with which the friends spoke of each other, at least, was mutual. " Don't believe that young fellow," he whispered to Matilda, " though he says the finest things in the world ; for he has a tongue that would deceive an angel. But you must not mind a word of it ; for its all hollow ; he is the greatest Philanderer in the regiment, and that is saying more than you may suppose," continued the Captain looking very significantly. " It would take the whole night to

tell you the number of ladies he has flirted with, though he never had any intention beyond the amusement of the moment; and yet, because he has a smooth tongue, and dresses well, he is to be preferred before an honest fellow, who never says more than what he thinks, and what he would."

"Lionhart, Mrs. Stockwell would thank you for some of that fowl, but you had better let me assist you," said Spencer, most opportunely for himself, breaking in upon the conversation.

"Yes, I must have some of the fowl, if it is only for the jelly," said the lady; "but now, do ye Captain Lionhart let Captain Fitzroy help it; for you know as you will keep niggles naggles, niggles naggles all night; and I always like a good slice of breast with my wing; but I don't say that as any way to disparage you Captain, for I respect you the more for the cause."

"—— Take the old witch and her cause, will her tongue never stop?" muttered Lionhart, quite out of patience at the interruption. He, however, insisted upon helping her him-

self; and, with some difficulty, accomplished his task; while Matilda observed, for the first time, that he had almost lost the use of his right hand? and recollected having heard of its being caused by a severe wound he received abroad, which, though dangerous, he had not esteemed of sufficient consequence to mention, till a second rendered it necessary for him to return home to try the effects of his native air towards his recovery. This she had learnt from Arbella Ferrars; for, from his own discourse, she would never have imagined that he had even been in the Peninsula. He resumed the conversation, lamenting the necessity he was under to begin his Welch journey, (which had been too long postponed,) on the following morning, and seemed anxious to secure every moment of Matilda's attention, while she staid.

This was a short-lived pleasure. Mrs. Melbourne, who began to be uneasy at being so long absent from her husband, rose to depart; and the company, as if by one consent, soon after broke up; with many congratulations on the "delightful evening"

they had spent, and many hopes of meeting to enjoy the same again—hopes in which Lady Torrendale politely joined, while she reserved to herself the privilege of pro-rouging, for an unlimited term, this sitting of *beaux esprits*; in which, it did not appear to her, that she made the conspicuous figure she ought to have done. Matilda seized the first opportunity to ask Arbella the meaning of the title of Nymph of the Danube. She doubted not it alluded to some work, with which she was unacquainted; and her friend's knowledge of general literature, and foreign languages, made her always a desirable reference.

“The Nymph of the Danube—the Danube,” repeated Arbella, “aye now I recollect, among my uncle's old German plays there was a piece with such a title.”

“And what was her character?”

“Why, if I mistake not, she was some goddess, or sea-nymph, (not much better than the Neapolitan syrens,) who allured a poor mortal to become desperately in love with her, and when he afterwards married a

good every day sort of body, like myself, *par example*, haunted him with the image of his lost happiness, by the perpetual miracles, with which she pursued him, of her genius and power. What's the matter with you? don't you like that description? You look like the governor in the Critic, it seems to have 'touch'd you nearly!'"

Matilda did not tell Arbella the reason of her question; but she still continued to repeat to herself, with a degree of painful perplexity. "It was strange that he should call me the Nymph of the Danube!"

CHAP. XVI.

With thee conversing, I forget all time;
All seasons, and their change, all please alike.

But neither breath of morn, when she ascends
With charm of earliest birds; nor rising sun
On this delightful land; nor herb, fruit, flow'r,
Glitt'ring with dew; nor fragrance after show'rs;
Nor grateful ev'ning mild; nor silent night,
With this her solemn bird; nor walk by moon,
Or glitt'ring starlight, without thee is sweet.

MILTON. *Paradise Lost.*

THE circumstances of surprise and interest, under which Matilda had been first introduced to Strathallan, had led him, perhaps, to notice with more attention than he otherwise would have done, her singular and captivating style of beauty. Her behaviour, when the Ball was in agitation, had con-

vinced him that she had a heart, which corresponded with the charms of her countenance: but to discover that she had a mind which in its minutest emotions sympathized with his, harmonized in every taste, and agreed in every feeling—was reserved for him in the too short and delightful evening he had passed with her, at his mother's *Conversations*. He could not resist seeking soon to renew a gratification so great. Matilda's timidity, that had at first thrown a veil over all her perfections, wore off by degrees; and, as Mr. Melbourne's continued indisposition prevented their intercourse from being so frequent as Lord Strathallan wished it, he enjoyed in those meetings a pleasure, perhaps the more exquisite from its being rare.

Mrs. Melbourne, for a different reason, was charmed with her evening. She was fascinated by the talents and conversation of Miss Swanley; and amused by seeing something resembling a society to which she had long since bid adieu. "Sappho is really as

interesting and agreeable," she said, "as her little rival is the contrary."

"Sappho, by all I hear, is the reverse of every thing a rational man should value," growled Mr. Sowerby.

"Well, my dear Sir, you will allow, at least, she is not one of the hum-drums; and, you know, *Tous les genres sont bons, hors le genre ennuyeux.*"

Mrs. Melbourne knew the way to silence her old friend; and, it must be confessed, was rather unmerciful in the use of her power.

Lady Torrendale was the least satisfied of the party. "Those clever people are the greatest bores on earth," she said one day to Matilda. "One cannot put any two of them together—I wonder what possessed me to collect so many of them. I had a recollection that reading parties were agreeable things—I am sure they were so at dear Lady Julia Melbourne's; but then Sir Harold was the soul of her theatricals, and her reading parties, and her suppers—Oh, those suppers!

where I have heard the charming * * *, and where—”

“ I know nothing of Lady Julia, or Sir Harold,” said Matilda, as she looked down, and sighed.

“ Not your cousin, Sir Harold?—Mr. Melbourne he was then. Oh, no, I had forgot. Well then, you knew nothing of a most captivating creature. With just a tinge of romance, sufficient to make him interesting, he had all the ease and gaiety of a man of the world ; and that at an age when most boys are at school with their tutors. Lady Julia was the dearest friend I had in the world. Old Sir Reginald was nobody, you know—always at the club ; and this young Melbourne was——”

“ An old flirt of yours,” said Lord Torrendale, quietly finishing the picture.

“ I own the soft impeachment ; Lady Julia Melbourne applied to me, to produce him and shew him a little of life. I would have done any thing for dear Lady Julia.—Then, suddenly, her wise husband chose to carry her into the country, away from all her

friends; as gentlemen will sometimes do," (looking at Lord Torrendale); "and we—somehow, we—new objects, you know, will—But I was really very sorry for her, at first. The next thing we heard was, that after lingering there some time, her health had obliged her to go abroad in search of a milder climate: and there she died. Sir Harold was on the continent, when the event took place; and I lost sight of him when he returned, which was on the death of his father, that happened soon after. He has lived ever since at Mosscliff Abbey, a magnificent place they have in the north; and, since his travels, has been entirely given up to study. But whether he draws plans, collects medals, or writes poems, I really cannot tell."

Strathallan exactly guessed Matilda's feelings at this little account of relations so near, and that ought to be so dear to her, as it was unfeelingly rattled off by Lady Torrendale; and endeavoured, by a redoubled portion of attention, and the resources of his ever soothing and animated conversation, to

banish from her memory every unpleasant feeling.

Matilda found, with surprise, that Strathallan was more the companion of her mind than even her mother. Accustomed to the habits of ingenious and polished society, and endued with every grace and talent that is calculated to adorn it, Mrs. Melbourne was too much a woman of the world to be able to enjoy, in their fullest extent, the sweet illusions of the imagination. Her education, while it tended to give to wit its finest edge, and most complete perfection, was perhaps of that sort, which rather prevents than encourages the expansion of genius. That temporary inaction of the soul, by which it alone is qualified for the admission of deep and lasting impressions; that keen perception of the great and beautiful, that power of wholly embodying abstract ideas, and living amidst the world of shadows, which gives the mind its poetical and romantic cast, is incompatible with an early mixture in society. Solitude is required to develope those finer emotions, those ideas evanescent and

delicate, which shrink from the collision of of general conversation, however intelligent and refined.

Mrs. Melbourne, who conceived this turn of mind in her daughter to be a defect, had ever applied herself, by a gentle, almost imperceptible, and delicate raillery, to repress every thing bordering on enthusiasm and romance: and Matilda, so far from priding herself on the possession of a soul superior to others, used every effort to conceal the excess of a sensibility, which she found it impossible to destroy. How great then was her surprise to find, that by Strathallan, a man used to the bustle and the pleasures of the great world, it was felt and cherished as her highest charm. He often caught her animation when the tear of sympathy trembled in her eye; the smile of pleasure played upon her lips, if she could persuade him to talk of the distant scenes he had witnessed. The subject, at first, seemed painful to him: and he could never be brought to mention any circumstance of the engagements he had witnessed; but, respecting the country, or its

inhabitants, he was less uncommunicative; and, when he made her, in imagination, the companion of his former excursions, or breathed the accents of that lofty tongue which was preferred by the Imperial suppliant when addressing his God, the landscape derived a new beauty, the language a new charm from his lips. When he described an early walk, or moonlight ramble, to visit some monument of barbaric splendor or modern piety, the moorish fort, the gothic tower, the ruin or the palace rose on the mind, clad in those mellowing tints, which imparted to them their romantic and magic grace. She followed, with him, the shivering goat-herd to his cottage on the cliff; or listened to the song of the muleteer, in the valley below. Of the higher orders of the people he spoke with more reluctance; and on that fruitful theme of eloquence, the beauty of the Spanish women, was utterly silent. While thus conversing with her, he seemed to lose the melancholy with which he had at first been oppressed; but another of a different sort appeared to have succeeded

it, and he had fits of abstraction, which filled those whom he most interested with surprise and alarm.

The fondness of the Countess for her two young friends daily increased; and she contrived to have one or other constantly at Woodlands.

One cold, stormy evening, in the month of March, when the favorite groupe happened to be assembled round Lady Torrendale within doors, Arbella, observing on their happiness and tranquillity, while the elements were busy without, continued—"Are you of Gray's opinion, Matilda, that the pause—listen to it—between the more violent gusts of wind, and the sound that gradually rises again with a shrill note upon the ear, exactly resembles the voice of a Spirit?"

"Matilda and Gray must be both good judges," said Lady Torrendale. "That is like the description Dr. Darwin gave of a flower—'precisely the colour of a seraph's wing.'"

"Well," resumed Arbella, "it certainly is like the voice of a ghost."

" 'Tis like the plaintive moan of a dying female's voice," said Strathallan, who had not appeared to be attending to the conversation before.

" Why a female voice?—what put that in your head, particularly?"

Observing in the countenance of Strathallan a degree of painful confusion, which it had never on any other occasion betrayed, Matilda, with a watchful tenderness, that seemed instinctively to point out to her whatever might be distressing to him, checked the voluble Arbella, and contrived so dextrously to turn the discourse, that during the rest of the evening, the subject never again came in question.

" There is something very singular about Strathallan," Miss Ferrars afterwards observed to her: " I wonder he keeps his looks so charmingly ; for, do you know, he never sleeps—never, or hardly ever—I know it; for his apartment is just over mine, and all night he is walking up and down there, or in the library. I joke him about it, and say it was the terrible things he saw abroad ' won't

let him sleep o' nights;' and do you observe he never will talk of any thing that happened there: I really believe something affected him.—Then, did I ever tell you the story of the ring; he had one that he never would show me, he said it contained Verdinha's hair, so one day I contrived to snatch it off his finger, and look at the chrystal. There was a little ringlet so bright and soft, I could hardly conceive it to have belonged to a boy, and a Spanish boy too. I overwhelmed him with questions, and if you could have seen how distressed he looked! I am sure there is some romantic tale we ought to know. I only wish whatever it is he would forget it, for it makes him very bad company and I am getting very tired."

Arbella was not the only person who was getting tired; Lady Torrendale confessed, now the bustle of the Christmas festivities was over, and now the country was thinned of visitors of consequence, and now that—a—Captain Lionhart was gone, she began to feel it intolerably oppressive; yet without the sinews of war, (she significantly observed)

she could not follow the fashionable swallows in their flight to London; and those Lord Torrendale would not supply. Matilda alone, amid the discontented circle was perfectly satisfied with her situation; and though arrived at an age when most young ladies think their attractions should be brought forward to more public notice, felt not a wish beyond the society with which she was at present surrounded. She wondered to find herself, in this respect, so superior to so great a lady; and, perhaps, indulged in a little secret self-applause at the reasonableness of her conduct in the very moment that reason's most insidious foe was stealing, unperceived, into the heart. Mrs. Melbourne was not so contented; she loved her husband, but she lamented his peculiarities. And when, just before Lady Lyndhurst's departure, she happened to see on her table a number of cards, with her daughter's name, that had just been struck off for the honorable Miss De Courcy's "first winter," she felt a mother's throb of regret in the reflection that charms and talents, in her opinion so much superior,

should not be produced to the world with equal advantages. All that Lady Torrendale's influence in her immediate circle could do was already effected. Her two young favorites, Arbella and Matilda, had, under her auspices, risen rapidly into fashion, and were already considered as stars of the first magnitude in the Derbyshire world; with this difference, that the introduction of the fashionable Countess, brought Matilda's advantages of birth and connection into more general remark; while it secured from malignant observation Arbella's deficiency in both. Could the vanity of giving the *ton* to the surrounding neighbourhood have sufficed for Lady Torrendale, she might indeed have been completely happy. *La cour et la ville* in old France, were not supposed to convey more different ideas than any fashion in language, dress, or manners, that had only general practice for its support, or that had received the sanction of the happy few admitted to Woodlands; and, indeed, when Miss Melbourne, by a few visits to Miss Ferrar's home, became more acquainted with the manners of *la ville*, she became less sur-

prised at her friend's fashionable enthusiasm, or that she endured a few mortifications to partake of more polished society. Arbella had often entreated she would spend with her some of those days she herself was condemned to pass at "aunt Stockwell's;" but her father's indisposition took up most of Matilda's time, and Lady Torrendale claimed; as her right, the few hours she could spare to friendship.

As the advancing season brought on an amendment in Mr. Melbourne's health, which enabled her to leave him more frequently, she no longer resisted her friend's invitations, and those of Mrs. Stockwell, uttered in that tone of extreme softness, which she imagined to be most insinuating.

When Matilda arrived, the house seemed to be in a degree of commotion; there was nobody to announce her, and she at length took the liberty of running up to the drawing room, where she expected to meet Arbella: her attention was arrested at the door by the sound of loud voices and altercation within; and by hearing Mrs. Stockwell, in no very

gentle tone, reproving one of her attendant damsels, and after cordially consigning her, before she dismissed her, to the escort of all the subterranean powers, concluding with, "saucy minx! do you think this is the way for me to give you a character?"

"I don't know," some one replied in a muttering voice, "but I shall take care to give you one."

At this moment the door burst open; Martha sobbing, and with her handkerchief in her hand, bolted past Matilda, while Mrs. Stockwell, quite ashamed to be discovered in one of her morning exercises, was profuse of her apologies. "Bless me Miss Melbourne, I did not expect to see you so soon, and I am afraid *as* there was no one to denounce you properly. For to say the truth, I have been making a little house-clearing, as one must sometimes do. Not that I was saying any thing to Martha, farther than a little remonstrance; but I am glad you came in, or it might have come to high words—she's a good girl, and knows I hardly ever give her a

jobation." Matilda begged her polite hostess would not think any apology necessary: while she secretly smiled at the contrast afforded by the sickening affectation of softness Mrs. Stockwell had already resumed, to receive her guests who soon came pouring in. All *top* men, or *top* women, or, at least, very *imminent* men, in town or country; and one top gentleman, who was an *imminent* farmer and grazier, was the top man of the whole county; and, to judge by the manner his friends spoke of him, Lord Torrendale was nothing in comparison to him.

In this circle, Matilda was amused to observe the degree of deference and respect Miss Hautenville (who, at Woodlands could sometimes hardly command common attention) received, as the chosen friend, or rather *kite*, of Lady Torrendale and Miss Mountain. Her first display of power, or rather tyranny, was, chusing to have the head-ache, instead of appearing at dinner; and Mrs. Stockwell, after many enquiries and messages, was obliged, with a most lamentable face of distress, to seat herself at table without her. "Arbella

my dear, do you take the head, I always set on one side—the Ditchess of Albemarle does so.” The second course had come on when Miss Hautenville deigned to make her appearance; but it was only to sit down with her hand applied to her head, in silence, and in an attitude of suffering; instantly a number of voices assailed her with so many compliments and enquiries, of what she would chuse, that, though she had at first refused to touch any thing, she at length suffered herself to be intreated; and a dish of wheat-ears being near her, she soon demolished the whole.

“ Poor thing!” whispered Mrs. Stockwell, “ she has *such* a delicate appetite! She can never touch a bit but wheat-ears, or sweet-breads; or drink any thing but soda water, or Pyrmont water, or them sort of exotics; and I get her Iceland moss for fear of consumption, and sometimes a little arrow-root; but I fear it won’t do.”

Arbella, disgusted with this assumption of consequence, could hardly conceal her feelings; and, at the tea-table, where she, of

course, supplied Miss Hautenville's place, thréw out so many *piquanteries* against would-be fine ladies, that Mrs. Stockwell, surprised at her recreant niece, undertook the defence of her friend ; and then, diverging a little from her subject, continued to urge, in whispers, the necessity of enduring a few inconveniences, for the advantage of forming fashionable connexions. " It is the same in all the relations of life," she said, " and that's what I have taken care to conculcate to my niece Arbella, and to my son too, if he would but mind me ; a young gentleman has plenty of ways of pushing himself in the world ; and, as for young ladies, from a partner at a ball to a partner for life, rank is the only thing should be considered. Yet how many do we see," she continued, turning to one of her cronies, and with a pathetic tone of voice, " who neglect it, both in the one and the other ! I had a young friend once, (Arbella don't bite your lip, I'm sure 'tis full red ; did you ever see me do so ?) a sweet pretty creeter she was, and her parents very creditable people too, I can tell you ; had a capital

iron foundery, kept their coach, a country house, high life all over. (Arbella love, dont laugh so loud, you'll disturb Miss Hautenville, did you ever hear me do so?) Well Mem; before she was twenty she had four very good offers. The first drove a gig; the second a tandem; then, a chariot and pair made a proposal, and lastly a coach and four. My young relation had objections to them all; the gig she said was old; the tandem crazy; the chariot and pair was impertinent; and the coach and four was a free-thinker. Well Mem, some time afterwards I saw by the newspapers—I saw—(Bella my love, do mind the urn—you have let the water run all about—did you ever see me do so?) that this young creeter—Miss Araminta Ferrars, (this infamous creeter I must call her) after refusing a gig, a tandem, a chariot and pair, and a coach and four, had gone at last, and married a serjeant, a common serjeant Mem, as sure as I'm alive. I was very sorry for her, but, of course, even if I had been inclinable myself, could not, for Arbella's sake, keep up any acquaintance with such a sort

of person. When, would you believe it—she had the assurance to write me a letter, and it was all about her husband. She praised him, and called him a prime serjeant: but, in my reply, I made her to know her distance; and told her, she might have what opinion of him she thought proper; but, if he was the primest serjeant ever bore a halberd, still a serjeant was but a serjeant, and must be a low fellow, and she as I could not associate with so low. Never heard from her again, so I hope and trust I made her ashamed of herself."

While Mrs. Stockwell was clearly proving that she had not been able to distinguish between a serjeant at law, and a recruiting serjeant, Minilla was meditating her escape before the card-tables should be set; and great indeed was her joy to see her father's carriage draw up to the door. Though it was quite early, she immediately took leave; and was so delighted with the idea of her release that she hardly perceived the dangerous situation for which she had exchanged the safety of Mrs. Stockwell's drawing-room. She

was awakened from this careless reverie by the coachman begging of her (with a face of dismay) "not to be frightened!" and found herself in the midst of a very uneven road, in turning which, one of the horses had begun kicking and plunging, and at length became so unmanageable, that the man, after having in vain attempted to quiet him, was obliged at length to own his young lady had better get out. Scarcely had she done so, when the animal, happening to strike his foot violently against a piece of broken rock, fell down; and, getting entangled in the traces, hurt himself so much, that it was impossible for her to think of returning home in the carriage. Less alive to her present perplexity than to her recent escape from a greater danger, Matilda inhaled the cool evening breeze, as it was wafted from the fountain of the Rocks, which was within a few paces of her; admired the rich foliage with which it was surrounded, and the extent of lawny prospect, that stretched beneath one side of the road. A moment after, the ap-

pearance of a man ascending the eminence arrested her attention. She felt she could not be mistaken; it was Lord Strathallan. The delight pictured in her countenance was more than reflected, in the animated joy that beamed in his. Behold her from below, her white dress floating on the wind; the radiance of an evening sun, tinging its folds with a wavy line of golden light; while, reflected from the pointed rocks around, it lent added beauties to her blooming countenance, her flowing hair, and the wild graces of her form; he could have adored her, amid these sequestered shades, as the tutelary Deity of the fountain. Never, to his ardent imagination, had she appeared in such dazzling, such captivating charms.

“ There seemed a glory round him, and ‘ Matilda’

“ The angel of that vision.”

He was soon made acquainted with the subject of her distress, and offered to accompany her home; in the course of their walk, he could not forbear expressing his admiration

of the scene in which he had happened to meet her : " what a romantic spot ! " he said, " have you not yet given it a name ? "

" My mother calls it, Sybil Gray, from the diamond clearness of the spring that flows into the bason below : and sometimes you may see me, like the Nymph in the Eastern tale by the waters of Oblivion, seated, in a pensive attitude, or with my book in my hand, within the cavern. "

" Oh, who can think, who can wish for oblivion, " exclaimed Strathallan earnestly, " when you are near ? "

Matilda tried to consider this as a common-place compliment ; she had herself spoken playfully. They were, however, for some moments, both silent ; she walked on, her heart swelling with a tender exultation, to which she durst scarcely assign a cause ; she reflected on the past ; she compared it with the present ; she remembered her visit to that fountain, when the fate of Strathallan had, though he was unknown to her, called forth the sigh of pity from her breast ; then, all was bleak, cheerless, desolate like the

feelings of those who mourned his loss. Now, nature blooming in the full luxuriance of renovated spring, seemed to have waited to burst forth and blossom into beauty, to welcome his return.

If the chance, that made Matilda the companion of his walk, was pleasing to Strathallan, to her it was an equal gratification. His conversation she found ever delightful; but now it had a peculiar charm. Oh, it was after the sickening frivolity, the impertinence, and affectation, she had just escaped from, that she felt how grateful, how refreshing, was the intercourse of a mind regulated like her own! Turning the discourse to a subject on which he always seemed, when with her, to dwell with peculiar pleasure, "You can just see the tops of the trees at the park at Woodlands; it now hardly deserves the name," he continued, with a smile, "I wish to extend the plantation to the right. Woodlands could be greatly improved. I would have clumps of trees on every naked and barren spot; and cut down those that bound the view at the end of the

lawn, and shut out from the prospect that bold chain of hills to the South — But (after a sudden pause) the romantic beauties of Derbyshire are nothing in comparison to the wild Ossianic scenery of Strath-Allan in Scotland—I wish you could see Strath-allan.”

This, though said without design, was not heard without emotion. Matilda did not immediately reply to the wish, and a second silence ensued; a silence, perhaps, more interesting than any discourse could have been. Still, whether engaged in converse or reflection, so many charms surrounded their walk, so fragrant was the air, so delightful the stillness of evening, so perfectly did all nature seem to accord in tasting the happiness of the moment; from the sheep and cattle that reposed in groups on the herbage, to the glittering insect that hummed and fluttered along their path, that they could each have wished to prolong, to twice its extent, a ramble so delicious, and to admire, while time fled unperceived away, a view so rich and varied; above. A bold extent of woods

and mountains, stretched as far as the eye could reach, and was lost at last in the gathering mists of evening—below, meadows and corn-fields, waving in every luxuriant tint of vivid green, afforded a different, but equally pleasing landscape. The road that wound between these lovely prospects, at length opened to a view of Mr. Melbourne's retirement; and, in a few moments Matilda was restored to her parents, who began to be alarmed at the length of her stay. Mrs. Melbourne thanked Lord Strathallan for his attention to her daughter; but he thought he perceived a degree of constraint and uneasiness in her manner, unlike the frank and graceful cordiality with which she usually received him: and, observing a similar anxiety in Mr. Melbourne's countenance, he guessed that some unexpected circumstance had disturbed the tranquillity of the family, (something they perhaps wished to communicate to Matilda,) and therefore almost immediately took leave. He was hardly gone, when Mr. Melbourne mentioned, with a composure that was evi-

dently assumed, the necessity of his setting off the next morning to London.

"Going to London!" Matilda repeated, astonished at a determination so sudden.

"Even so my love," said Mrs. Melbourne, "and I must accompany him.—Dear Lady Torrendale has kindly undertaken the charge of you in our absence, which you may be sure, will be as short as possible. Necessity can alone detain us. You do not fear," and she attempted to smile, "that your father will become a Bond-Street lounge!"

"But mamma, in my father's weak state of health—indeed, indeed he will want his little nurse."

"While I am with him!" with a glance of playful reproach, "Matilda, Matilda, he must prove to you that he can live some days without you."

Mrs. Melbourne appeared so determined, that it was useless to press the point. She seemed equally unwilling to give a reason for this sudden resolution. Matilda spent a night in tears and anxiety, which was increased by the obscurity in which this un-

expected communication was involved ; that Mr. Melbourne should, though scarcely recovered from a dangerous illness, undertake a journey of such a length, and with so little previous preparation, had to her something surprising and mysterious. Solicitude for that parent's health and safety, was mixed with her feelings of curiosity and alarm : there was, however, in the morning no time to remark the effects of this painful night upon her countenance. Mr. Melbourne, anxious to escape from the kind wishes and adieus of his servants and tenants, who crowded round the carriage, prepared for an early departure. He strained Matilda fondly in his arms : " Bless you, my darling," he said, " may the exertion I am going to make, terminate in your happiness, and I am more than repaid."

Scarcely comprehending the meaning of these last words, his daughter only remarked the weakened voice, the trembling hand that still held her's, and the enfeebled frame of her father, as he was supported by two of his faithful domestics into the carriage, and .

felt that she was wretched. Mrs. Melbourne's manner, at parting, was most affectingly and even prophetically solemn. She could hardly be prevailed upon to tear herself from the treasure of her heart. She repeatedly embraced her daughter, and endeavoured, in vain, to acquire strength for the separation, by anticipating the moment which should restore her to her arms.—“Of Lady Torrendale's kindness,” she said, “I can entertain no doubt—she is not all we could wish, but she has obligingly stepped forward on this occasion, and we had no other alternative. Your prudence and discretion, my love, will, during this short interval, best supply the place of a mother's care.”

“Oh do not make it necessary,” said Matilda, who felt all her assumed courage give way as the moment of separation arrived—“Let me follow you, I will serve you, attend you, I can still go, I will not take a moment for preparation, only do not, do not leave me.”

Finding all attempts to change her mother's resolution vain, Matilda's only re-

source was acquiescence, however painful to her heart; and Mrs. Melbourne employed the short time that remained for them to be together in a few admonitions respecting her daughter's future conduct, and in speaking to her on a subject which had lately caused her some concern. "You have gained a great conquest over Mr. Sowerby's prejudices," said she; "he has so far waved his antipathy to fine ladies, and, above all fine ladies, to Lady Torrendale, as at length to reply to the advances of her family, for your sake; and to consent to call sometimes at Woodlands, to communicate any letters he may receive from us, and to prevent, (as he expresses himself,) a total suspension of your former habits of study and application: you see," she continued, with a penetrating smile, "how anxious he is for your improvement."

"Yes, indeed, he becomes quite like papa," returned the artless Matilda, with great simplicity.

"No, not at all like papa," replied the anxious mother. "When a man, without the right that relationship gives him, assumes,

with a woman, the commanding tone of an adviser and monitor, and thus by degrees gains an encroaching influence over her conduct, it is, almost always, a proof, that he thinks he has an interest in the mind he is forming, and that the lover is to reap the fruits of the virtues that were sowed by the friend."

"A lover!" cried Matilda, starting with undisguised horror.

"Nay my dear!" said Mrs. Melbourne; "I only wished to caution you; tell me, would it really pain you were he to think of you in the light I have mentioned?"

"I cannot even imagine, it Mamma: how could I hope to console him for such a woman as he has often described his first wife? and so young as I am, I should be quite lost at the head of such an establishment."

"But suppose he waved your inability to emulate the late Mrs. Sowerby, or to do the honours of Clifden-down, and seriously wished you for the wife of his bosom—Oh Matilda, Matilda!" continued Mrs. Mel-

bourne; dropping her tone of attempted irony, while an expression of anguish and solicitude, which seldom dwelt there, suddenly overcast her features, "do I deserve to be treated with concealment, or evasion? Would that his virtues could indeed make sufficient impression on your heart—but fear nothing my love; 'twas an unreasonable wish, and no advantage this world could afford should ever tempt me to force your inclinations, unless you could bring yourself to love him."

"Oh! mamma," interrupted Matilda, blushing, "I have, as yet, hardly thought of love, nor do I believe I ever shall; for they say it has its principal source from want of employment: but if I do, I am sure it will be a feeling quite different from any I have experienced for Mr. Sowerby."

"Then you know what love is *not*, though so unacquainted with what it *is*?" cried Mrs. Melbourne; her countenance resuming its former expression of good-humoured railery. "May you long continue so, my

child," she added, tears of maternal tenderness starting into her eyes—"but if it should be otherwise, remember your first, your best, your only counsellor, ought ever to be, your mother."

The entrance of Mrs. Melbourne's woman, (who travelled in the carriage with her) to receive some orders, interrupted this affectionate conversation; a moment afterwards, a barouche drove up to the door, and Mrs. Melbourne resigned, into the hands of Lady Torrendale, the object of her fond anxiety; and, hastily stepping into the carriage, hardly trusted herself with another look, while it remained in sight. Matilda's tears, 'till now with difficulty suppressed, flowed abundantly. The Countess did not endeavour to check this necessary relief: but, while she received them on her bosom, endeavoured, by every gentle and feminine soothing, to mitigate the violence of her emotion; and, with a kindness which Miss Melbourne never afterwards forgot, cheered and supported her during the whole of their way

to Woodlands. At length the venerable mansion appeared in sight: and the poor drooping traveller, her heart bursting with the first real sorrow she had ever known, was consigned to that solitude and repose which her state of spirits made so necessary to her recovery.

CHAP. XVII.

But if, at first, her virgin fear
Should start at Love's suspected name,
With that of Friendship sooth her ear,
True love and friendship are the same.

THOMSON.

THE grief of Matilda, on this first separation from all her heart held dear, was violent beyond even what the cause might be supposed to demand. The parting words of Mrs. Melbourne respecting Sowerby, the wish implied in them, so different from the former expressions of avowed dislike, in which that lady had frequently indulged, affected her painfully. She feared some mystery was concealed beneath them; yet, finding it vain to attempt to fathom it, relapsed into a dejection from which she was only roused by the receipt of a letter, informing

her of Mr. Melbourne's health and safe arrival.

It was the attentions of Strathallan that first reconciled her to the aspect of gaiety, and the sight of strangers; and in this trying moment, he added the dangerous character of consoler, to his former title of friend. There was, in the manner of this amiable man, a melting tenderness, more captivating in the end, than the most brilliant spirit and vivacity. Alive to the slightest sufferings of others, he seemed to insinuate, to infuse himself into the very soul of those he loved; and he seemed to love whoever excited in him the smallest degree of interest. His style of countenance was analogous to his character; though regularly beautiful, still it inspired in whoever first saw him, less the idea of beauty, than of love; it was one which would have communicated the knowledge of such a passion to a heart till that moment ignorant of its existence.

Matilda had another consolation in the society of Miss Ferrars, who was invited to pass some time at Woodlands. When a

passion for fashionable celebrity or personal admiration did not interfere, Miss Melbourne found this young lady's understanding solid and penetrating, her judgment discriminating and correct. She possessed many languages, and spoke them all, even better than she could write or read them. The warmth and quickness of her disposition always qualifying her to excel most in what demanded readiness and decision. Besides her amiable qualities and talents, there was one point of union between them, which (though Matilda was unconscious of it,) drew them to each other. All the lively and partial esteem that was dawning in Matilda's heart for Strathallan, was experienced by Miss Ferrars at the same moment for his brother. Yet it was not, as in Matilda's case, a parity of manners and character that attracted the lively Arbella towards Fitzroy. Neither Spencer nor Strathallan were blessed with those wearing, TEARING spirits, so delightful to the possessors, so painful to every one on whom they are inflicted. Yet though the manner of both had a softness which bor-

dered upon pensiveness and melancholy, this characteristic was, in the two brothers, the result of very different causes. In Strathallan it arose from reflection and sensibility, heightened and concentrated by the operation of singular and unexpected occurrences. In Spencer it was the consequence of an habitual languor, which, to be dissipated, required the excitement of gaiety, society, and applause. Spencer, to be seen to advantage, must be animated with the desire of pleasing—Strathallan with that of making happy. Spencer was delightful when any plan of amusement was to be promoted—Strathallan all amiable, where benevolence or generosity was the object. To both, the behaviour of Matilda was polite and obliging; but she reserved for the favoured Strathallan, the riches of her mind; and he felt the proud distinction; not so the ungrateful Spencer, who seemed anxious to prove to Arbella, on every occasion, how unworthy he was of the partiality she lavished on him. His behaviour to her one evening, when they were all met in the Caverna d'Aurora, filled Miss Mel-

bourne with indignation. It may be necessary to go back a little and explain what the Caverna d'Aurora was.

Lady Torrendale, who was cold and stately in general society, piqued herself on acting the lively and elegant hostess in her *boudoir*, as she styled a little favourite apartment, where the productions of every climate seemed assembled, and which, for richness and elegance united all Lord Torrendale's taste, to his Lady's love of magnificence; there, retiring with her chosen few, she loved to be styled Calypso, surrounded by her Nymphs; and received the incense liberally offered by the Poet Alcæus, who had been established by his friend Lady Lyndhurst, before she left the country, in that agreeable situation; and maintained by flattery, the post he had acquired by favour. Here, every evening, he was sure to be encountered by the brilliant Sappho, whom the Countess, from vanity, chose also to patronize; and amused herself with seeing these obstinate enemies, impelled, by an invincible attraction, to a

scene where they were sure of meeting each other, and yet where they must dissemble their hate, in contributing to the enlivening of the party. Here, by universal consent, every troublesome form was banished, and every one bore the characteristic or romantic appellation by which, as a kind of watch-word, they were known to their intimates. The names of Miss Swanley and Mr. Spring were so completely merged in those of Sappho and Alcæus, that they were constantly designated by them, except indeed when the less courteous cognomen of the Shears, given by Arbella to the unlucky Bard, was sometimes remembered to his no small mortification. She herself, and her fair inseparable Matilda, obtained the denomination of Celia and Rosalind. It was difficult, when in his company, to forget Spencer's surname of Eyes; while his brother, from his partiality to his Scottish residence, and Miss Ferrars' having once, in her rattling manner, declared he was the only man whose personal appearance exactly gave her the idea of Leyden's

“Lovely Lord of Colonsay,” was never addressed by any other name: and Miss Mountain, whose coldness might have better qualified her for the character of the Mermaid*, was, from the loftiness of her port, and the stateliness of her dignified charms, always styled Sacharissa. Here, all seemed to partake of the happiness and freedom of the scene, from Lady Emily, who danced, in fairy rounds, to Miss Langrish’s magic music; or, far happier, sat nestled close by her brother Strathallan, looked in those gentle eyes, and in silence blessed his return; to Spencer, who, lounging on a sofa, amused himself with talking brilliant nonsense to Sappho, a species of accomplishment in which that young lady was fully his match.

Of Sappho, it was not easy, immediately, to form any decided opinion. That numerous body to whom Miss Seward has so happily given the appellation of the Proserps, would have determined the question in one word, by saying, Miss Swanley was “not

* Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border,

like other people :” but as this charge, besides being too vague and general, has the additional disadvantage, that it may be applied, for different reasons, to several very different objects ; such as the Venus de Medicis, a modern Esquimaux, or an ancient Pigmy ; it may not be unnecessary, in order properly to appreciate her character, which was an energetic and singular one, to be, at some future time, somewhat more detailed and particular. Without having Sappho’s eccentricities, the little stranger from the Rocks found the agreeable ease that reigned in this society peculiarly suited to the innocence and candour of her disposition ; yet it was to one mind alone that her’s felt pleasingly and powerfully attracted. Matilda feared not to unfold every good and generous emotion of her soul in the presence of Strathallan ; and when Strathallan, seated between her and Lady Emily, said, “ now I have my two sisters,” he seemed as if nothing need be added to complete his felicity.

“ Come, shut the door, and draw round, all ye that are initiated,” said Alcæus, with ex-

ultation, one evening after they had dismissed a formal party, whom they had determined to exclude from their laughing supper; "Thank heaven we are clear of the humdrums! For my part, when I am seated in this dear apartment, and see you, Contessa, "*Les jeux, les graces, et les ris,*" attending your steps, I have a mind, as priest of this sacred region, to consecrate it to social pleasure, and write in golden letters on the enchanted portal,

"Lungi ah Lungi ite O profani."

"That was the inscription," said Sappho "to the entrance of the Caverna d'Aurora, mentioned in Tasso's *Aminta*. It was well known he meant by it Leonora of Estes boudoir. It was a pretty compliment to an Italian Princess."

"And why not to an English Countess—Gad I've a mind I'll give names to every room in the house."

"That will be new; it is mentioned, I think, as far back as the time of Madame de Maintenon, that the apartment in which she

generally received her visitors, was called, in allusion to her birth-place, America; the King's was named, as more suitable to the theatre of his empire, Europe; while Asia and Africa were allotted to other intimate friends."

"No quarter, my 'fair enemy!' Now would you fain say of me what was said of Voltaire, 'What is good of his is not new, what is new is not good.'"

"Certainly. I am equally struck with the resemblance Alcæus bears to Tasso, and to Voltaire."

Alcæus, who was lodged, *secundem artem*, in a garret, immediately began by naming his air-built citadel, Belrespiro. The room in which Lady Emily received her *no-lesson* from Miss Langrish, and her various more important lessons from Italian, French, and German professors in music, drawing, dancing, &c. where she was permitted to keep her pet lap-dog, who was not allowed to share the honours of Floss; and where she kept, without permission, two dormice, a squirrel, a marmoset, and a rabbit, the poet

wisely denominated Noah's Ark; while, to Lord Torrendale's study, where none, under any pretext, were ever admitted, and which was said to be begirt with the head of many a grimly sage and old philosopher, he gave the terrifying appellation of the Blue Chamber. The Earl heard the sarcasm unmoved; content if, amid the lively group, he was allowed to remain silent and unobserved.

"My dear he is a *slate*," said Arbella, in reply to some remark made by Matilda on his Lordship's want of conversational talents; "The man is a slate, and nothing better nor worse."

"You have such strange names for every thing! Pray what am I to understand by a slate?"

"A slate, my dear, is that, which, if it happens to be among the coals, will neither burn itself, nor let any thing that is near it burn—or *comprenez vous?*"

To return to Spencer. The usual party were assembled in the dear boudoir, now never called by any other name than la Caverna d'Aurora. Miss Mountain, the divine

Sacharissa, was seated at the piano; Lady Emily accompanied her on the tambourine; Strathallan stood by, attending, or appearing to attend to her peacock-tones and abortive execution; and Miss Hautenville, who recovered from her fine lady-like transformation, appeared in this region, in her true character of *Kite*, acted convulsionary to admiration; with eyes cast up, and breath suspended, she made as many contortions as an ancient Pythia, or a modern disciple of Mesmer, to express the delight with which the performance overwhelmed her; occasionally interrupting herself to exclaim "Dear, how great Miss Mountain is in those Aria's since Trasimani has *made her a voice!*"

Spencer, with his back to the group of ladies, was teaching, or trying to teach, poor Miss Langrish, Trou-madame; while Lady Torrendale, reclining on a sofa, in conversation with Arbella, sighed, shook her head, turned her fine eyes, full of softness, upon her, and tenderly pressing her hand, seemed to wish it were possible to fix that wandering fancy.

Matilda, who knew that all these blandishments were designed to draw this amiable unsuspecting girl into some unguarded confession, to be repeated, perhaps, to the unworthy object of her partiality, that he and his mother might smile together at her expence, was anxious to interrupt the dangerous *tête-à-tête*, and approaching with her work, "What do you think of it, Miss Ferrars?" she said, "is it not beautiful?"

"Beautiful!" Arbella repeated, "but you did not do that, it was by Miss Crossbrook; I know her hand; Lavinia Crossbrook does every thing by a thread."

"I should detest a woman who did every thing by a thread," cried Sappho.

"You must not detest Lavinia Crossbrook, dear Saph," said Spencer, suddenly turning from the *trou-madame* table "for she has just now the honour to stand very well in my Imperial Highness's good graces. A sweet innocent creature—lovely blue eyes," looking at Arbella, "clear fair blushing complexion, and the figure I particularly admire; rather under than over-size;" still

looking at Arbella, "exactly the slight yet beautiful form of the little girl who acted first Sultana in *Les noces Persanes*, at the Opera."

"Surely you are not serious in your admiration, 'tis such a piece of affected insipidity."

"Excuse me—there is, in my opinion, a great charm in that elegant *nulleté* of character. In her manners, a woman should have nothing *salient*—I hate a dasher"—again he looked at Arbella.

"The Scotch expression 'drumlie,' " said she, "is one that I have often envied them, and wished to apply to those dismal insipids—now Lavinia Crossbrook, with her rolling eyes and her nun's face, is what I call a drumlie girl."

"And she is what I call a charming girl"—resumed Spencer warmly. Arbella turned from him—Miss Mountain had quitted the instrument, she walked up to it, and, while her hand wandered rapidly over the keys, endeavoured to conceal the anguish and perturbation of her feelings. An extremely

pretty French air lay upon the music desk—
she tried it, and then accompanied it with
the words—

“ De mon Berger volage
J’entends le flageolet,
De son perfide hommage
Je ne suis plus l’objet.”

Her voice faltered, as she repeated the last line, and her eyes fell upon Spencer’s—his expressed, at that moment, the perfection of careless indifference.

“ Is not that the air in the Devin du Village,” said Sappho, “ in which Madame de Pompadour drew tears from the eyes of the most volatile and thoughtless court in the world, when she represented the character of the lovely and forsaken Colette? I think I see her in her white dress, adorned with blue ribbands, her straw hat and crook enwreathed with the same.”

“ Drew tears!” cried Spencer, who, like his Lady-mother, could, when he had any object in view, lay aside the excessive gentleness and refinement of his usual manner,

"I never heard such cursed nonsense in my life. Do you think that in a court where gallantry was so universal, and inconstancy of course, so impossible to be avoided, so simple a circumstance as a young peasant's ceasing to pay his devoirs to his mistress, when he became tired of doing so, should excite such violent emotion—Come, come, let's have no more of this. Who brought it up? Celia, Miss Langrish," he continued, in a half laughing, half decisive tone, "never as you value my displeasure, sing another French song while I stay; they are my aversion."

"And yet," said Miss Langrish, in a tone that she meant should be interesting, "several of them express so well the artless language of affection."

"Affection! O horrid! if ever I have a wife, (and his eye glanced at Arbella) the first thing I shall do will be to desire her to erase that word from her vocabulary. Nothing can be so preposterous, so absurd, and so teasing, in the present state of society; and if I suspected it before-hand—Oh! by

Jove, I think the greatest preservative against the fatal noose would be the knowledge, that the lady was one of those tender—dying—mournful—reproachful fair ones, (he dwelt with marked emphasis on every separate word) who are always complaining, and always forgiving their dear—false—Damons.”

“Miss Langrish, Miss Langrish,” said Lady Emily, who had waited with impatience for the conclusion of this speech, of which she little guessed the intention, “Do pray tell me what is the meaning of Devin du Village”. In vain the governess tried to nod and wink her into silence; even her usual never-failing resource “that is not a proper question,” was now, from the publicity with which it was made, of no avail. Lady Emily, with true infantine pertinacity, as yet uncorrected by the studied politeness of Lady Torrendale, reiterated her demand; till finding evasion useless, the young lady replied to the question, now for the sixth time repeated, “Miss Langrish pray what is Devin du Village?”

“Devin—a hem—Devin du Village means

—means, my dear—you are very inquisitive. Why don't you look into your dictionary? You will find it means the Divine of a Village—a Village Divine—in short, in our language, a Country Parson.

“Is that reading sanctioned by the Academy, Madam?” said Alcæus, with affected submission.

“It is, I assure you, Sir—at Miss Mofat's academy.”

The laugh which, at this reply, could be scarcely suppressed, for a moment turned the attention from the subject which had been so painful to Arbella; but Spencer was determined not so soon to give up the dear delight of trifling with, and torturing a heart too fondly devoted to him. He renewed his critique upon the languishing shepherdess, as he called her, and seemed to study, by every look and word, how best to convince his Celia of his complete indifference, and of her folly in having misconstrued any former attention of his, into an opposite sentiment. Arbella looked down, fearing every moment, her vexation would betray itself in

tears. Spencer saw his power, and had the cruelty to make use of it to the utmost.

“ I do not remember the air Celia just played us in the music of the ‘ *Devin du Village*,’ ” said Matilda, taking up some remark of his, to which her friend was unable to reply: “ but in the scene with the Conjuror (*le Devin*), where Collette consults about the means to recover her lover’s heart, there is a song equally worth attending to; and which is said to contain good advice—

“ ‘ L’amour croit s’il s’inquiète,
Il dort s’il est content,
Et la Bergère un peu coquette
Rend le Berger constant.’ ”

Arbella tenderly pressed her hand;—a look of gratitude showed how she valued this well-timed interference. From that moment, rallying her spirits, she addressed all her discourse to the poet Alcæus; would touch no refreshments but what he brought her; made him write verses on her, the principal merit of which consisted in their being handed across the table with great mystery,

and shewn to her alone; extolled him beyond all the French *poètes de société*, placed him before the graceful Bernis, *le gentil* Bernard, Nivernois, Chapelle, Chaulieu, and La Fare; asked him some questions respecting an opera he was composing; offered to set some of the songs: from thence returned to the subject of the French operas; drew a rapid sketch of their progress from Quinault to Rousseau; digressed from the lyric to the pastoral poets; praised the “Jardins” of Delille, and the Idylls of Deshoulières.

Miss Hautenville put her head on one side, repeated “*L’aimable Delille!*” and thought she had given an opinion: while Miss Mountain stared even wider than usual, to perceive herself forsaken by her bard, of whom she had been the earliest patroness. He seconded the efforts of Arbella to admiration: and, setting down all her attentions to the account of his own merit,

“For ne’er

Was flattery lost on poet’s ear,”

sportively reproached her with having drawn

him away from the centre that usually attracted him.

“ If you mean the Loadstone Mountain, my poor Sindbad, I sincerely pity your involuntary inconstancy; but what shall I do for you?—Believe me, when I compare Miss Mountain to a magnet, I recollect it has two powers; and the attractive one I do not find to-night with her.”

Animated with the desire of pleasing, and with the success it had met, Arbella soon in reality acquired the spirits she had at first assumed. Meanwhile, it was observed that Spencer appeared disconcerted; that he refused to take any thing; and every moment looked graver. On his loss of appetite being remarked, Lady Torrendale (who, with all her tenderness, sometimes did not dislike a laugh against Joseph) observed in a whisper that he did not like his “ *sauce piquante*.”—“ She is a charming lively creature,” said Fitzroy to himself, on reviewing the behaviour of his fair mistress that evening; and I must not lose her for a trifle. What a pity

she is not born in a certain sphere, and has not certain connexions!—Even as it is, if her old aunt continues unreasonable, and if Lady Almeria D—, and Miss P—, and Miss C—, and Miss De V—, should fail me—I think after all, that may be—I may take her.”



CHAP. XVIII.

—————As she liv'd peerless,
So her dead likeness, I do well believe,
Excels whatever yet you look'd upon,
Or hand of man hath done.

SHAKSPEARE. WINTER'S TALE.

ONE day, that Matilda entered Lady Torrendale's sitting-room, rather unexpectedly, she found her engaged in conversation with Lord Strathallan; in which the Countess seemed to be remonstrating on some subject that deeply interested her, and his Lordship with equal eagerness attempting to justify himself. "I hope I have given proofs of the sincerity—the warmth with which I—" He stopped, without concluding the sentence, as Matilda appeared. Both paused, and then attempted to turn the conversation, with the

air of persons who had been interrupted in discussing a subject of importance.

Lady Torrendale, who was the first to recover herself, begged she would stay. "We have been talking of something not very material," said she. "This gentleman, though he will soon perceive the reasonableness of what I say, is troubled with an unfortunate delicacy which makes him unwilling even to oblige, lest the favour he confers might lessen the disinterestedness of the attachment he inspires. No one can be more jealous of the nature of that attachment. It must be unmingled with interest's more base alloy. But *consolez vous*, my dear exceptionous knight; the advice I give you is as much for your advantage as mine."

Lord Strathallan, who did not seem to like raillery on that head, soon took an opportunity of leaving the room; while the lively Countess carelessly repeated

" 'That still the grateful youth might own
I loved him for himself alone.' "

I have been giving my opinion to Strathallan

upon a subject," she said, "that is at present a matter of some consequence to us all." Then drawing her chair closer to Matilda's, and taking her hand in all the friendly confidence of a *tête-à-tête*, she continued—"Though there are not above eight or ten years between us, yet even this slight difference gives something more of authority to what I can suggest, at the same time that we are sufficiently near in age to prevent a little friendly counsel and interference on my part from appearing to have the harshness of a parental command. His sex is later in acquiring a knowledge of the world than ours, and the wisest of them may consult us with advantage on a question in which it is required."

Her Ladyship concluded this irrefragable maxim with an approving toss of the head; and Matilda soon found, that this disinterested and friendly advice was to persuade Lord Strathallan to agree to his father's disposing of the Scottish property, which she had often heard mentioned, in favour of his son Spencer. This Lord Torrendale could

not do without his eldest son's consent; and it was what he had often declared he *would* not do, whether his son consented or not.—“I have endeavoured to persuade Strathallan,” she said, “of the evident advantage and utility of this. Lord Torrendale talks of not alienating an estate that gives a second title to his family,—of not impoverishing his eldest son: that son, whenever he has the misfortune to lose his worthy parent, will find himself possessed of an ample, too ample fortune; while poor Spencer is utterly unprovided for—for you do not call his commission, and what personal property Lord Torrendale may be able to leave him, any consideration to a man in his style of living. Spencer has talents, has ability, that might one day give lustre and support to the house from which he sprung: but what can a man without property, without influence, do? All this I have fairly represented to his brother, with the coolness and impartiality of a third person, equally anxious for the welfare of both. But then—‘I do not love him,’—nor ‘Spencer does not love him’—never asks his

advice—‘ He cannot bear to load a brother who dislikes him with unwelcome obligations’—‘ he cannot bear to owe that to his gratitude, which he strove in vain to obtain from his affection.’—‘ Indeed, he wishes Spencer well ; but he fears his imprudence would prevent even this last sacrifice from being of essential benefit.’ Oh, that false delicacy ! how easy it is to see through it !”

Matilda could not compliment herself on being as clear-sighted as her Ladyship. She remembered the obligations, both of a pecuniary, and a much more valuable nature, which the Countess, in the first hurry and surprise of grief, occasioned by his supposed loss, had once acknowledged to have received from Strathallan ; and she could not persuade herself that a brother so generous and affectionate should refuse to step forward when any real exigence demanded his assistance. The present communication only confirmed to her the remark of months :—she had observed, that in his family, Strathallan was not happy ; that the excessive regard and attention he seemed to have for his

beautiful mother-in-law, was, if not a little affected (a term she could not bring herself to apply to any thing in his conduct), at least rather constrained; and that Spencer appeared more his companion, than his friend. From the Countess he had never experienced, in childhood, those attentions which could have supplied the place of the mother he had lost; and whose image, though so early torn from him, was fondly impressed on his infant mind. Lord Torrendale, indeed, had early discovered the superiority of his eldest son; but, cold and austere from nature, his manner had involuntarily checked the first ardour of affection, that expands in early youth; and when, at length, he would have tried to alter it, and sink the father in the friend, the time was past when he could have read the secrets of that heart and commanded its every delightful emotion. That such a heart should suddenly change, and be closed against the powerful claims of blood and friendship, Matilda found it impossible to believe.

Happily her Ladyship was one of those

convenient discourses who, so they can find one in whose ear they may murmur a complaint, or expatiate in self-commendation, never require the interruption of an answer; and think a good hearer by far the most agreeable figure in a conversation-piece.

After a great deal of buzzing, to which Matilda listened, and a great deal, to which she did not, the Countess summed up the whole with a hope that when they next met she might find her son-in-law more reasonable. "He might conclude," she said, "that, where we happened to differ, he was probably in the wrong; and that if I may pique myself upon any thing, it is some knowledge of life, and a little experience in matters of business.——I believe it is time for our airing, Matilda; are you for the dust, or the pallet? For the pallet, I suppose; so I will leave you a quiet hour to enjoy yourself."

Matilda had obtained permission from Lady Torrendale to take possession of a small room commanding a northern light, where she might sometimes amuse herself in

painting, -uninterrupted by the various and distracting occupations of which the general sitting-room was the scene. This apartment communicated with two others, which had been formerly allotted to Lady Emily, as play-rooms, and which were now totally neglected; their style of decoration not being sufficiently modern to please the taste of the mistress of the house; they contained nothing of any value, except a few old family pictures. Matilda had seated herself at her desk; and taking out a drawing that Lady Torrendale had recommended to her to copy, had just sketched a figure, which, for airy lightness, almost emulated her own, when her occupation was suspended by the appearance of Lord Strathallan; he begged she would resume it, and bestowed the highest commendations on the drawing.

“ You often promised to give me a lesson,” returned Matilda, “ but you must not begin by praise.—I assure you, my Lord, I am patient of reproof, and any improvements you suggest will be thankfully adopted.”

Lord Strathallan sat down, made a few

trifling corrections ; then throwing aside the pencil—" Shall I acknowledge Miss Melbourne," he said, " that I think myself fortunate in finding you alone ; I have wished to speak to you upon a subject in which my feelings, my heart, are concerned. Affectation is unworthy of you, as it is, I hope, undeserved by me ; you are not ignorant, I am sure, of the subject of my recent conversation with Lady Torrendale, and I may appear, in your eyes, a hard, unfeeling brother ;" he paused, a thousand expressions came to Matilda's lips in reply ; but none with which she felt completely satisfied. She was shocked he should believe her prejudiced against him—she wished to assure him of her good opinion, but how sufficiently to measure the terms in which it was to be expressed, was the difficulty.

" Believe me, my Lord, I never imagined—believe me, I never supposed you capable, I never wished for any communication that—"

Again she was silent, and Lord Strathallan proceeded—" I know that is the light

in which I am often represented—to the world I am content to be so—I value not the opinion of the world—but your opinion I value; and in trying to rob me of your esteem, she does me an injury, of which a mind like her's, is incapable of conceiving the extent.”

Matilda made no reply. Why should Lord Strathallan be so very anxious to excuse and justify any thing that might hurt him in her good opinion? This was a perplexing question: but it was a perplexity which, though it prevented her immediately answering to this appeal, was not unattended with pleasure.

“ I love my brother,” he continued, “ none know how much I love him; and could what is demanded of me contribute to his real advantage, I should not hesitate a moment; but shall I, to enable him to supply the demands of present extravagance, deprive him of all resource in his future life? Spencer has fine talents (he spoke with a tenderness of which Matilda at that moment thought Fitzroy unworthy,) he has virtues that I hope will yet expand; but he is still

very young, and is not aware of the value, the importance, of independence. My father has been careful, but too careful to secure to me a load of useless wealth," here some painful idea seemed, for a moment, to intrude, but, (soon resuming the subject of his discourse,) "I never wished to increase it; I consider him and myself as holding Strathallan in trust for Fitzroy: to be his as soon as—" Distrest that he should think it necessary to enter into such a detail, Matilda would again have interrupted him: but he prevented her, adding with increased emotion. "Am I wrong Miss Melbourne in the conduct I have thus far pursued? is this friendly interest in his real welfare to be confounded with the selfish policy that seeks its own advantage at the expence of others?" A look from Matilda, full of esteem and confidence, convinced Strathallan, that at her tribunal at least he had nothing to fear. He apologized for the interruption his entrance had occasioned, and entreated she would allow him the pleasure of seeing her

continue the charming study upon which she was engaged.

“ No, no more drawing for me to-day,” said Matilda, concealing by an affected gaiety how much her heart and soul were absorbed in the communications he had just been making. “ I am like the bird who deserts her nest the moment any intruder has approached it.”

“ Would I could stay near it for ever,” murmured Strathallan: “ perhaps though you do not chuse to paint any longer, you would have no objection, Miss Melbourne, to have some subjects recommended to you for the future exercise of your pencil. I assure you, in those deserted apartments there are forms and countenances not unworthy of Matilda’s touch. If you would permit me,” he continued, with a smile, “ to be your Cicerone,—”

Matilda rose.—Owing to the gloomy and neglected state of the adjoining rooms, she had never thought of examining the pictures they contained; and now, with a little more perturbation than was desirable for a con

noisseur, she prepared to have their beauties pointed out to her by Lord Strathallan, "and why were these apartments deserted?" she enquired.

"Look," said his Lordship, opening the shutters, by which means a full light was thrown upon the portrait of a lady opposite to them, "did you ever remark the expression of that face?" The picture represented a young lady, still in the bloom of youth; the elegance of her form, the exquisite fairness and beauty of her neck and bosom were remarkable; but nothing could long attract the attention from the liquid softness, the heaven of countenance her blue eyes expressed, to which the delicate bloom spread over her features, and the mild regularity of the features themselves, seemed to contribute, but could not be said to form her principal charm: a pensive smile sat upon her lips; it was a smile of repressed sensibility, and one which seemed to say the mind from which it emanated was not happy. "That is my mother's picture," said Lord Strathallan, "it was

taken in that distant land, where she drooped, languished, and died. She was beloved, but she was not long lamented. Had she lived—" then turning quickly to another, as if fearful of pursuing the subject, he recommended it as more worthy of Miss Melbourne's attention. It was a whole length figure of a boy of about four or five years of age, who seemed guarding, with jealous watchfulness, a favorite bird, which he kept nestled close to his bosom, from the gripe of a cat, which appeared ready to spring forward and devour it. The inbred, habitual cunning and cruelty expressed in the looks of the cat, formed an admirable contrast with the momentary caution and suspicion which had stolen over the soft and infantine features of the boy; while the flow of health spread over his cheek, the mild sweetness of his eyes, and the rich luxuriance of his clustering curls of a golden brown, made the picture altogether as pleasing a study as could be desired by the amateur or artist. " Could you trace any likeness in those mild features

and that rosy cheek (said Lord Strathallan, turning round with a forced smile,) to that "excessively fine man, Captain Fitzroy?"

Matilda confessed she could not; "yet such he was; and, as youth advanced, his mind promised to equal the graces of that form. Active, penetrating, and inquisitive, nothing seemed too high for his comprehension, too laborious for his perseverance, to attain. With a soul ardent, and thirsting for every species of knowledge, he seemed one of those favoured beings whom nature has marked as destined to rise above the crowd, in whatever walk of life her gifts may be employed; but society, early and frivolous society, destroyed the work she had so well begun. Happy if even his heart had escaped the contagion! what would I not have given to have touched that heart, to have obtained its confidence, but that was impossible. Yes, I would have given up Strathallan, the seat of my early pleasures, the favourite abode of my mother! more would I have sacrificed could it have purchased friendship;" he paused, and then fixing on her those blue eyes which, whether

in joy or anguish, alike pleaded to the heart they addressed, he continued, "in my family, in the world, I have sought, vainly sought, for that affection, the wish of my heart, the dream of my soul; once, only once I met it, and then, too late discovered—" this last broken sentence he uttered in a hurried voice, and tone scarce audible, "forgive," he resumed. "This wandering of a heart too severely tried. Oh Miss Melbourne, Matilda, consoler, gentlest friend, to you alone I would dare to speak those feelings, you, you alone can allow for, can understand them." The emotion with which Matilda heard these words is not to be described. Never had Strathallan addressed her by that appellation before. Matilda, ~~his~~ Matilda, it seemed that, by this expression, he had brought her nearer to him; this trifling circumstance, which Matilda would have scarcely remarked, sunk deep into her heart; "can you forgive me," he cried, "for unintentionally paining a bosom gentle and indulgent as yours: believe me—"

"Very pretty indeed," a voice exclaimed,

which seemed to be that of a person just entering the room, "I hope we do not intrude;" turning round they beheld Miss Langrish and Miss Hautenville at the door of the apartment; it was the former young lady who made the exclamation, and who, advancing towards Matilda, with eyes in which jealous rage attempted in vain to assume the appearance of contempt, she said, "I am surprised Miss Melbourne that you could have amused yourself, as you formerly did, prying into my studies, you who have found out such useful ones for yourself with Lord Strathallan;" but irony being a figure which requires calmness of mind to be kept up with consistency, she dropped the attempt, and continued, in a voice trembling with passion, "I see now why you withdraw yourself from the general society: but Lady Torrendale shall be informed of it; I assure you Ma'am, Lady Torrendale shall not be duped any longer."

Matilda, who, feeling perfectly innocent, had none of that awkward confusion and want of presence of mind, which often gives the appearance of guilt, replied very coolly,

“ my dear Miss Langrish you need not give yourself the trouble of informing Lady Torrendale ; for, as I shall see her Ladyship in a quarter of an hour, the circumstance (how ever insignificant in itself,) of my having examined some family pictures in company with her son, will probably furnish (for the want of something more interesting,) matter for conversation : if, however, you pique yourself upon telling a story well, or think it of importance that her Ladyship should be informed of it still sooner than I have stated, I beg you will hasten to her with the news, for fear I should anticipate it.”

Miss Langrish coloured, and seemed not to know how to look, upon receiving this calm reproof. Miss Hautenville said “hem.”

“ I hope Miss Langrish,” said Strathallan, who seemed excessively hurt at this scene, “ that you will not employ so very trifling an incident as my pointing out to Miss Melbourne some paintings, which, however injured by time and dust, I think worthy to be rescued from oblivion by her pencil, into an engine to give pain to her feelings ; and,

through her, to hurt me, who must consider her, while remaining in this house, as claiming a different treatment from our kindness and hospitality." These words, from Lord Strathallan, with the accompanying expression of resentment, which so seldom passed over his gentle countenance, completed the confusion of Miss Langrish; she looked down, and stammered out some apology for her imprudent warmth. Matilda, extending her hand to her, assured her with a smile it was already forgotten. Miss Hautenville, who all this time had been hanging on her companion's arm, repeated her oracular "hem," an observation which, as it can neither be replied to nor controverted, is found particularly useful by those ladies, who wish to cast a reflection on the conduct of another, without hazarding the chance of any remark being made in return upon their own.

As Lord Strathallan had foreseen, Miss Langrish was too wise to risk her present tranquillity by disclosing her suspicions, what-

ever those suspicions might be; and even Miss Hautenville, for once, thought it better to be silent. A sneering demand from that lady, "if she had DRAWN lately," a formal request from Miss Langrish that she might not interrupt her "STUDIES," and a witty remark from the poet Alcæus, that the DRAWING-room was, after all, the only place for a young beauty to shine in, were the only penalties Matilda had to pay for an hour the most charming she perhaps had ever spent; the hour in which Strathallan had unveiled the emotions of his heart to her; in which he had called her his consoler—his friend—depository of the secret thoughts of Strathallan! How many proud, how many delighted feelings mingled with this consciousness! pity added its charm to the sentiment of admiration, of esteem, with which his image was ever surrounded. He was not happy—happy as he deserved to be: and, if a starting tear would surprise her unawares upon this conviction,

"A sigh, a tear so sweet she wished not to restrain."

Having once spoken to her with the openness of friendship, Strathallan now communicated to her every feeling, every opinion as it arose. He took a peculiar delight in discoursing with her on those benevolent plans in which he was sure that she would sympathize. Matilda who had been used to be her father's almoner at the retirement of the Rocks, missed, at Woodlands, the pleasure attending that daily occupation, and found nothing so much compensate for the want of it, as the contemplation of the still more extensive exertions of Strathallan. She perceived that, though he never reflected upon the line of conduct his father had pursued, he regretted the period in which he had absented himself from the abode of his ancestors, and did every thing in his power to remedy the evil this neglect might have occasioned.

Alive to "every want and every woe," the poor had, in him, at once an advocate, a benefactor and friend. "Strathallan has a fund of *unappropriated* tenderness;" Lady Torrendale one day carelessly observed, "take

care, Matilda, he does not give it into your keeping." At this indiscreet sally, both coloured and seemed to suffer, but were both in equal danger? While the innocent and ingenuous Matilda was gradually, under friendship's guise, allowing an attachment the most exclusive to take possession of her heart, Strathallan, with the advantage of being many years her senior, and in habits of a much greater intercourse with the world, was, perhaps, only seeking an amiable and sympathizing friend, who could sooth the sorrows of his. We will not absolutely deny that he loved; but, though capable of passion to its utmost excess, and its most exalted refinement, certain it is that it was not necessary, with him, as with most others, to be under the dominion of a sentiment, tyrannical, engrossing, and often selfish, in order to shew sympathy, interest, and attention. Of a nature composed of all the softer, kindlier elements, he could give much without breaking in upon his heart's sacred store: and that was what rendered his intercourse imperceptibly, yet ever, dangerously, attractive;

Sappho had once, with her glowing pencil, most truly touched his character. "As colours appear invested with added brightness when seen beneath the rays of the sun, every affection seemed as if it assumed a warmer tint, a livelier glow, as it passed through the mind of Strathallan; and, in return, whatever is the species of interest he inspires, it always partakes of the nature of enthusiasm."

Yet, though adored by his inferiors, the idol of his sister, and his father's pride; though the object of imitation, of esteem the most marked, and regard the most flattering, with his own sex; of jealousy, competition and the most passionate admiration, with the other, still he feared he had never yet met with that pure, disinterested, tenderness, independently of every adventitious circumstance, which his ardent and romantic mind alone could value. The friendship of Matilda appeared the nearest substitute for it—the Countess, easy, careless, and unconcerned, seemed not to perceive, or not to heed its progress.

• "O non vède, o non s'avvéde."

Lord Torrendale, indeed, though he treated Matilda with uniform kindness, and even distinction, seemed to view his son's increasing partiality with some uneasiness; and never saw them engaged together in conversation, without appearing to regret his having been so communicative of his opinion on the subject of the Duke of Ormond and Lord Ossory in a certain *tête-à-tête* he once had with her.

Strathallan was scarcely ever from her side in those walks that were become more attractive than any in-door employment, as the beauties of the country gradually unfolded themselves, beneath the genial influence of the advancing season; a season which seemed, as it approached, to bring a fresh influx of joy and gladness into every heart, and to impart even to Spencer's languid cheek a portion of that vernal bloom, of which sickness and fatigue had nearly robbed it.

"He grows handsomer and handsomer every day," said Arbella, "but not more agreeable I can assure him—and so I shall

tell him when next we whisper 'soft and low.' Did you ever observe, Matilda, the difference of Fitzroy's and Lionhart's voice? Poor honest Frank's is rough and boisterous—Spencer's sweet, low-toned, like that of a man in the habit of saying things he wishes to be heard but by one alone—Poor Lionhart! It is not for thy worth which is superior, nor thy talents which are inferior, that thou art constituted the illustrious Fitzroy's chosen 'Amigo.' It is that manly plainness of appearance, so well contrasting with the elegant beauty of thy friend that has promoted thee to the honor of accompanying him every where, apparently in the character of his 'Fidus Achates', but really in that of his Foil."

After the first unpleasant sensations were over, Matilda saw no reason why she should suffer the silly sarcasms of persons she despised to prevent her having recourse to an employment which had charmed the impatience of many a weary hour; and, determined to sketch some of the figures that Strathallan had pointed out more particularly to her

notice, she once more established herself in her little painting-room. Hither she often invited Arbella, Lady Emily, or even Miss Langrish, to inspect the progress of her work. And here, Strathallan had too much delicacy ever again to intrude. To chuse among these family groups was not so easy a task as she had at first imagined. That of the youthful Spencer and his bird was a pleasing study; but then, besides the awkwardness of sitting down to copy a picture intended for a very vain young man, who was of her daily acquaintance, the piece contained too many objects, and was too complicated and difficult, she feared, for her execution: others there were; but then they were formal wigs, or stiff ungraceful heads of the Lady Bettys' and Lady Dorotheas' of the last generation; it would be absolutely no improvement to paint them. At length, after much deliberation, nothing was found to suit her purpose so well as the portrait of the late Lady Strathallan, which, besides being the best designed and most exquisitely coloured, had the great additional recommendation of "not

being like any body living." "She was beloved," she often repeated to herself these words of Strathallan during the progress of her pencil; and, uniting them in idea to the name and the fate of this early victim of sorrow, the train of reflections they suggested gave rise to a little fanciful design and inscription, with which she adorned the sketch she had just completed; it represented a rose broken from its stem, the legend "*elle fut aimée.*" The recollection of a French device, with something of a similar inscription, had tempted her to give it in that language. When she contemplated this tribute to the memory of a beautiful young woman, torn from the most endearing ties in the bloom of youth; she felt satisfied with its execution, and anticipated the praises of Sowerby in the next visit he should pay her. The pleasure she promised herself was, though unknowingly, perhaps heightened by the consciousness that he could not praise a line in the delineation of those beautiful features, that lovely countenance, without at the same time praising the resembling features of Strath-

allan. Nothing is so bold as the heart of a lover, at a distance from the accomplishment of any of its designs; nothing so timid, upon approaching the completion of the slightest of its wishes. Matilda, who, during the progress of the work, had secretly enjoyed the ingenuity which enabled her, unsuspected, and with impunity, to indulge in some of her feelings, no sooner saw the portrait in the hands of her rigid censor, than the most painful and extravagant apprehension seized her; and she thought the feminine dress and form scarcely sufficient disguises, to conceal that in them she had portrayed the soft smiles and love-breathing looks of Strathallan: her agitation was so great as even to attract the notice of Sowerby, no very accurate observer of the variations of countenance in those he addressed. He interrupted some admiring comments he had been making upon the picture, to exclaim "why Matilda, what's the matter? you are nervous I believe: the hurry of this dissipated place don't agree with you, child."

"Oh, no," she replied, her eyes filling with

tears, "it is not that, I am perfectly composed; but these praises, so great, indeed I cannot bear them—from you," she paused: and Sowerby, betrayed for a moment, by her ambiguous expressions, into an error the most delightful he had ever indulged in, was nearly surprised into an avowal, which would soon have brought on the destruction of all his hopes; but a timidity foreign to his usual dogmatic character, seemed suddenly to have put a seal upon his lips; and, a moment afterwards, a circumstance catching his eye, which excited at once his surprise and displeasure, his lovely pupil was soon roused from imaginary terrors, to the real uneasiness produced by his serious reprehensions: "Matilda what's the meaning of all this," in the voice which always announced "this," was something excessively wrong, proceeded an exclamation of "why child you have forgotten your French! in the inscription underneath the picture, you have put the masculine for the feminine pronoun." Matilda looked at the drawing, which he turned, or rather pushed towards her, and read with dismay and asto-

nishment, instead of *elle, il fut aimé*. She had hardly apologized for this unaccountable oversight, when she was alarmed by a second exclamation of "Matilda, what's all this," her inexorable tutor had been looking over the remarks he had desired her to make upon her last astronomical lesson; and had already discovered two mistakes in the first page, and that, out of four problems he had left her to resolve, three were done wrong. Listening with a look of contempt and incredulity to the excuses she attempted, in palliation of her accidental inattention, he replied to them in that tone of irony, which was still more painful to her feelings, than serious reproof, "really Madam, I congratulate you on the accuracy of your calculations. Your talent for observing is equally wonderful; and I doubt not, in time, you will know the pointers from the pleiades. How I shall applaud myself for having had some share in the education of a young lady, who, threatens to rival Miss Herschell, and surpass Miss Smith!" As Matilda turned away to conceal the tears she could no longer suppress, Sowerby continued

resuming the severity of his usual tone. "Look'ye child, this may be all idleness and folly for aught I know, occasioned by the frivolity of the society in which you have lately lived ; but if it has any more serious foundation, beware how you listen to any nonsense ; how you enter into flirtations, (I think you call them) with strangers. Trust me, such conduct will be productive of nothing but sorrow and disappointment to yourself, and anger and regret to your truest friends."

He was silent from resentment, Matilda from vexation. When, at this critical moment, the door was flung open, and George Spring advancing up to Miss Melbourne with a face full of officious joy, abruptly cried, "Miss Melbourne, don't you want some wentle-traps?"

"Wentle-traps, Sir!" thundered Sowerby, provoked past endurance at this ridiculous interruption.

"I say Madam," resumed George, turning with a little less confidence to Matilda,

"Didn't you say you wanted some wentle-traps to complete your Papa's collection, because if you do," he continued hesitating,

"I have just got a present of some of those beautiful shells, and I am sure I should be very happy—"

"Officious monkey!" murmured Sowerby, while Matilda, knowing the poor boy, who constantly paid her every attention in his power, meant a civility, felt hurt at the ungracious reception he must think they had given him. George, awkward and unwilling to retire, though conscious he was an intruder, began humming an air *par contenance*. Sowerby caught some of the first verse.

"By the side of a murmuring stream,
As an elderly gentleman sat,
On the top of his head was his wig,
And the top of his wig was his hat."

The philosopher darted a look upon him that seemed to say, "do you mean to affront me, Sir?" But George proceeded, satisfied and unconscious of giving cause of offence, through

one or two stanzas more, till having arrived at those important words—

“Cool reflection at length came across,

As this elderly gentleman sat;

He resolv’d to put up with his loss,”—

—human patience could bear no more—

Sowerby rose up, threw down, with a tremendous noise, a chair and table that stood in his way, and casting a terrible glance upon the unintentional offender, darted out of the room. George, perceiving this was no time to think of entertaining Matilda, followed his example; and this innocent and amiable girl was left to herself, or rather to misery.

However hurt she might feel at the harshness that appeared in the manner of his interference, she had that habitual respect for Sowerby’s superior knowledge and experience, that any insinuation of his, had weight with her; and his parting words sunk deep into her mind. “And can it then be so?” she cried. “Can all this friendly interest, this tender, this delicate attention to relieve the sorrows of a drooping heart, be meant as so many snares, to dazzle and de-

ceive? Yet such indeed, I have heard, is often the conduct of those who move in the world of fashion—that world, in which I am a stranger, but with which he has been acquainted. Ah, no! I'll not believe it; the noble Strathallan is too good, too generous." And with that name of Strathallan, as by the magic spell that stills the murmuring ocean, the tumult in her bosom was appeased. A thousand soft and endearing images crowded in upon it, to supply the place of those painful ones, with which it had till now been haunted. Sowerby and his reproaches were banished in a moment from her mind; for it was the privilege of Strathallan, whatever scene he occupied, to reign alone.

Too much agitated with the events of the day, to like the noisy society of the general room, she sought, in her music, a resource against the return of unpleasant thoughts. Enjoying the evening breeze which blew from an open window, and seated alone at her piano, she had just touched the first notes of a melody which she always found soothed

and tranquilized her spirits;—it was at that soft, dubious hour of sun-set, when approaching evening, sheds over every object her own harmonizing tints. Scarcely had she begun to sing, when the sound of another voice united to her own, surprised her—it was Strathallan's. How did her lately tightened and oppressed heart expand and swell, with unbidden transport, as those tones, deep, rich, and powerful, mingling thus unexpectedly with her's, pleaded to its inmost feelings: She pretended not immediately to perceive his approach, that she might prolong the pleasure it inspired. Never had any circumstance presented to her, the image of a union so intimate with the only mind that corresponded to her's. Breathing together those soft languid notes, to the rich balmy air of a declining summer's day, it seemed as if their souls were mingled and borne away to some blissful isle, where melody and love alone might mark the lapse of time.

At the close of the song, Strathallan entreated she would let him hear her in another; a gratification, he said, which he so

seldom enjoyed in the general circle, where obtrusive noise and shew, were too apt to usurp the place of expression, sensibility, and taste.

Matilda, when wearied with singing, played him several of his most favorite pieces, with that unbidden grace, which waits not to be told, when it can confer a pleasure. She had a talent, possessed by but few, of producing from the subject of any music, however new to her, the most beautiful variations—running through every combination of harmony, with a rapidity and brilliancy which rendered the expression of “flying fingers,” when applied to her light, feathery touch, no longer a poetical common-place; but in reality the only manner of appropriately describing the perfection of her skill—and then, returning to the original air, in a strain so soft, so sweet, and plaintive, as finally to establish the touching triumph of nature over the most dazzling exertions of art.

“I am not surprised,” said Strathallan, (alluding to a passage they had lately been

reading together in the life of Alfieri), "that our favourite Italian poet should describe himself as composing most of his sublime pieces during, or immediately after, the performance of music. While you play, my soul is filled, my heart oppressed, by the variety and number of the new and exalted emotions it experiences. Images of virtue, of heroism, and tenderness, beyond what this world can afford, arise within my mind, and seem only to require embodying, to start up in forms of more than mortal beauty. But when you have ceased, the illusion vanishes; my enthusiasm is extinguished, and I feel I never was designed for a poet."

"You were designed for more," said Matilda; and a conversation, thus begun, continued with its soothing spell, to render imperceptible the lapse of time, and to banish every painful and intrusive recollection.

Had Sowerby been able to conceive how much his ill-judged severity at this moment weakened his cause, even he, little as he had been accustomed to restrain his feelings, would, in this instance at least, have checked

the expression of his impatience. Exposed to the daily, the hourly fascination of converse such as Strathallan's, it was when contrasted with the unmerited harshness she had just before experienced, that it appeared invested with its most dangerous and seductive charm ; it was when, dejected and mortified, she looked around for consolation and support, that its engaging tenderness, its insinuating softness, stole upon her wearied spirits, and, while it won her soul from sorrow, won it from itself.

The serenity inspired by an hour thus spent, extended its influence to the rest of her evening ; and Matilda was retiring at night, her fancy filled with a number of gay and pleasing ideas, too flattering to be distinct, when, just as she was preparing to undress, she was alarmed by a sound at the other end of her apartment, like a groan ; and, advancing with trembling steps towards the spot from whence it proceeded, she perceived her friend Arbella, stretched upon the sofa, which filled an alcove in her apartment, apparently in an agony of sorrow. All

the delightful visions that had, a moment before, floated on Matilda's fancy, vanished on beholding the real affliction of her friend. Arbella's face was almost entirely hid by a handkerchief she held in her hand; but the moment she perceived Matilda's approach, she sprung from her couch, and throwing her arms around her, burst into a fresh torrent of tears. "It was you I wanted to consult," said she, in a voice interrupted by rising sobs.

"For heaven's sake, dearest Arbella, what is the matter?" cried Matilda; alarmed beyond measure at this violent display of grief, in one who had almost obtained the appellation of the laughter-loving queen. "Is your aunt taken dangerously ill? or—"

"No, no, no; that would be no matter at all, you know—or—I don't absolutely mean no matter, but nothing compared to—"

"Well, is it any thing about Lady Torrendale, then?"

"Lady Torrendale!" exclaimed Arbella, starting, as if her indignation kindled with the name—"A wretch! who can sentimentalize,

and toss her head about—and smile—and smile—and deceive—and betray and ruin you!”

“ But still you do not tell me what it is you complain of. At first, you said I could be of use to you, Arbella. Celia! do you mistrust the friendship of your Rosalind?”

This appeal seemed to rouse Arbella: it was always easier to touch her fancy, than her heart. She at length consented to disclose in intelligible terms the mighty secret. It was no other than the discovery that the mischievous little poet, Alcæus, in a novel ushered into the world under the auspices of the Countess of Torrendale, had, in the character of “ Arabella, the Female Quixote of Fashion,” made very free with Miss Ferrars’ name, her relations, and connexions; and, availing himself of its similarity to the title of another romance, had represented in a very ridiculous light, all the little extravagancies into which her attachment to Lady Torrendale had occasionally led her.

Extremely relieved by finding the evil was of no greater magnitude, Matilda endea-

voured to reason with her friend, who seemed bent on quitting the house that moment; but in the course of their conversation, she could not help suspecting, that something more than the gall of Alcæus's pen must have envenomed the shaft that so rankled in the bosom of Arbella. At length she confessed, while burning blushes crimsoned her cheek, that it was the part Spencer had in this affair, that went most cruelly to her heart. "I found the novel, among a heap of similar trumpery," she said, "on Lady Torrendale's toilet: and, while looking through it with that avidity which, as it were, possesses us sometimes to seek what is disagreeable, a pencil dropt out. I had observed several of the most provoking, severest things, had marks of approbation in pencil. I picked it up, but could hardly believe what I saw—it was Spencer's—I had remarked the case a hundred times; it was a gold one Miss De Courcy gave him."

"Still, I am unwilling to think Lady Torrendale can have any share in this business. *She* may not have read the book; you know

she reads very little. It may have been dedicated to her without her permission."

"She! she knows it well enough: and now I can guess the meaning of the smiles, and nods, and whispers, that have been going on for a month past among the cabal, as we call the set below stairs. And this is what the world styles a SWEET woman! and a most in-te-REST-ing woman!"

"But still you acknowledge the pencil-marks were Captain Fitzroy's, not her's."

"No, they were not—were they? How could you remind me of that? Aye, there's the sting!"

Matilda saw how deeply her friend's peace of mind was concerned in putting an end to a partiality which had as yet produced nothing but mortification; and for her sake determined to disclose a circumstance which, though not communicated to her under the absolute seal of secrecy, she had always considered as a kind of confidence that she had resolved not to betray. She related to Arbella the conversation she had with Lady Torrendale a few days previously to the arri-

val of Miss Mountain; in which that lady had styled her "my daughter-in-law that shall be." She added the observations she had herself made respecting Spencer's attentions to Miss Mountain, on his arrival, and at the very time he was shewing the most marked coldness to Arbella. She added to this many circumstances she had afterwards observed. "O, I see it all!" exclaimed Miss Ferrars: "but you must decide for me, my friend—I shall suffer, but obey."

At length it was agreed between the two young ladies, that Miss Ferrars should, on the following day, announce that her aunt could no longer dispense with her society; and thus withdraw herself without animadversion from a scene rendered hateful to her, by the petulance and malice of one individual, and the encouragement he received from the rest: and that, without absolutely breaking with Lady Torrendale, she should gradually slacken the bands of her intimacy with one who had proved herself unworthy of her confidence. "How many thanks I owe you, my dear little Prudence," she said,

“for restraining my headstrong turbulence, which would have given such a triumph to the proser. ‘There is the end of the *belle amitie* between her and Lady Torrendale,’ they would say. For I assure you, the privacy and distinctions of the favoured region, and the fashion enjoyed by those who visit at the *Residence*, as it is called, have excited great jealousies among those who are not of the chosen few. What I wish,” she continued, “is to get away without seeing Spencer again; for his idea is hateful to me.”

“That you can easily manage; for you can take leave of Lady Torrendale at her toilet, and he always rises late.”

“I long to put your plan in execution.”

“You see the delay I required did not make much difference; the clock has already struck three, and the birds are beginning to chirp under our windows.”

“Yes—the little unfeeling wretches! But though it is so late, or rather so early,” continued Arbella, “I have no inclination to sleep;” and, without inquiring whether her

friend might not possibly have some, she continued the recapitulation of her wrongs: she had just began the third edition, with additions of the ever-interesting history of the dressing-room and the gold pencil-case, when suddenly interrupting herself, she exclaimed: "This is very wrong! I should not keep you up to listen to my nonsense. You are very good, very patient; but you must want to sleep."

This was true. The tumults and perplexities of the day made rest more than usually necessary to Matilda; and she suffered herself to be prevailed on by her friend to undress; Arbella continuing the whole time, while she assisted her, to harangue upon the cruelty of the Countess, and the perfidy of her son. "Good night, sweet Patience!" she said, as she at length prepared to leave the room.

"Good night!" Matilda echoed.

"Arbella retreated a few steps towards the door; then returning—"But isn't it peculiarly provoking," she resumed, "that my prophecy to Helen De Courcy should ex-

actly come true against myself: I told her, at the ball, Alcæus would hitch her into a satire; and you see he has brought me into a novel.—Very provoking!—Good night.”

Matilda endeavoured at length to compose herself to rest. Arbella put her head in between the curtains—“He mistook in the use he made of my name, which is not Arabella, but Arbella. Go to sleep, my love; it quite pains me to see you losing your rest.—It is the same as the Lady Arbella Stuart’s, the female Pretender mentioned in Hume; if the little wretch had had any knowledge of history, he might have remembered that—But don’t let me prevent you from sleeping.”

“You do not, indeed; I am quite awake. What I have heard will I fear keep me long awake,” replied Matilda; whose innocent and ingenuous spirit was surprised and pained to excess by the discovery she had made.

“That’s my own Matilda,” cried Arbella, embracing her with tenderness, before she concluded her audience of leave. “Give

me a friend, who will thus soothe every sorrow, share every joy;—prove that little Pope's maxim should not be confined to the superior sex alone; but in every trial act up to its noble spirit.

“ ‘ One should our interest, one our passions be ;
My friend should hate the man who injures me.’ ”

CHAP. XIX.

L'onda che mormora
Tra sponda e sponda,
L'Aura che tremola
Tra fronda e fronda
E' meno instabile
Del vostro cor.

METASTASIO. SIROC.

ANXIOUS to support her friend in the last trial she had to go through, Matilda rose early and sought Arbella, whom she already found tolerably composed. We are told by a pleasing author, "*La jeunesse dort bien sur une resolution;*" and with that which she had taken Miss Ferrars had reason to feel satisfied. "I hope I shall not see Spencer," she repeated.

"I hope I shall not either," said Matilda;

"for I shall never be able again to look on him in the light I formerly could."

As Arbella did not wish any explanations with Lady Torrendale, she altered her first plan to that of announcing her intended departure when they should meet at dinner. She was prevented however from putting this design in practice by the absence of the Countess, who, whenever attacked by slight illness or caprice, ordered her dinner up to her own apartment; and who, suffering under one of those two complaints, took it by herself that day. It was necessary, therefore to wait for her appearance in the Caverna d'Aurora, where the circle generally retired to take coffee. Its usual inhabitants dropped in, one by one, and a kind of constraint and melancholy seemed to reign over all.

The appearance of Lady Torrendale was a welcome relief. "Eyes," apparently unconscious in what manner he had offended, was quietly sunk, (beside Floss) in repose upon the sofa—Arbella, with her back to him, sat in silence at a window, obstinately ad-

miring the prospect. Lionhart, too happy to have got possession of Matilda's ear, was whispering to her, " You see I did not forget my promise to make Woodland's my way back, unless I could get out this summer."

" Apropos, Lord Strathallan," said Alceus pertly, " When do you think of getting out?"

" Oh," cried Lady Torrendale, " he must not think of it till then," looking down and laughing. " Bless me, what an indiscreet creature I am!"

" I do not know what you mean to do, gentlemen," exclaimed Spencer, stretching himself, and opening his languid eyes, " but I am cruelly tired of this inactive life, and, I really believe, must soon assume the sword and plume again—why, do you know how long I have been here? It is, I assure you, more than six months already."

" Oh, what delightful things are those unlimited leaves of absence!" said Arbella, looking disdainfully at him. " I really do not know what a man of fashion could do without them. How charming, while loung-

ing negligently on a sofa, to look through an eye-glass at the rural prospect, and sing the "Soldier tir'd."

"You may rally as you will, Miss Ferrars, but I declare to-day, when attempting to resume my helmet, I was shocked at its insufferable and unusual weight—You see," he continued, shewing the table on which it lay, "I have been trying to accustom myself to it."

"'Tis a ponderous helmet," said Miss Mountain, holding it at an awful distance, in her giant grasp, while she gazed on the shadowing plumes, "but not so huge, I doubt, as that which proved so fatal to Otranto's Prince."

"It presses cruelly upon me, I know," resumed Spencer, as he fixed it on his graceful brow; "but you, ladies, so much surpass us in every thing," he continued, affectedly, "how I envy your superior strength. In hunting, Miss Mountain is more active than I am: in dancing we are always the first to give in: and I doubt not this cap, which gave me such an excruciating head-ache"—

Here Alcæus cut across to make some foolish sarcasm about brains; and Arbella remarked, "There are some gentlemen who find the slightest inconvenience intolerable: I am sure it is not so heavy—"

"Will you try?" said Spencer.

Arbella, not aware of the forfeit sometimes incurred by such a compliance, heedlessly consented. The adventurous youth did not delay to urge his claim. Surprised and offended, Miss Ferrars haughtily drew back; Spencer insisted, but Arbella, favoured by the whole of the female group, pushed open a glass door that led into the pleasure-grounds; and, light as a nymph, escaped from him.

"A race, a race," cried the poet Alcæus, "Captain Fitzroy, Miss Ferrars has won if she reaches the end of the walk first;" and up he skipped, as he said, to measure the distance. Spencer began the chase—

Arbella's agility long kept him at a distance; nothing was an obstacle to her speed—the love-lorn lily drooped its head, the dusky myrtle shook from its leaves the dew as she

carelessly brushed by its blossomed sweets. Weary, out of breath, she still continued at full speed; her companions, who had followed her with their eyes almost to the end of the gravel walk which stretched before them, were near crying *victoria* to the swift and spirited Arbella, and insisting on the return of her persecutor; when, just as she thought herself secure, fate presented an obstacle in the officious little poet, who, starting up and spreading his arms declared she had no right to proceed any farther. Vexed at the unfair interruption, she tried to dart past him; but before she could effect this Spencer had come with her, and redoubling his speed was the first to reach the end of the course. If the pursuit thus terminated in his favour, it was more owing to the address of the bard than his own. It however procured for him the pleasure of returning with Arbella, at rather an easier rate than that at which they had set out; and he took the opportunity to demand an explanation of her, which turned out, as such explanations generally did, to his advantage. Perhaps Miss

Ferrars found the Captain a more ingenious commentator on the story of the gold pencil-case than Miss Melbourne; or, perhaps she was herself one of those students who always think the last reading the best—be that as it may, they were remarked as they approached the house to be deeply engaged in apparently earnest and pleased conversation; while Alcæus, who formed the trio, hopped along repeating

“Zephyr whither art thou straying,
Tell me where?

With prankish girls in gardens playing,
False as fair.”

Matilda, though not aware of this new league of amity, observed, that Miss Ferrars made no farther mention of departure, and therefore thought it most prudent to be silent on the subject. She could not, however, so far conquer the usual frankness of her disposition, as to treat Spencer with the same good humoured freedom she had formerly done, in the little pastimes in which they spent the evening. He perceived the change, and affected to be offended at it.

"What is the matter with you Matilda," said Arbella, in a whisper to her, "Do treat my poor little Fitzroy kindly, he is quite mortified, he says, with your sullen cold looks."

"I know not, Miss Ferrars, in what I have had the misfortune to displease your fair friend," Spencer resumed, "but I am sure you will plead for me, that I may obtain forgiveness."

"Arbella, the intercessor for Fitzroy," Matilda murmured, "I thought, my dear, your opinion of him had been different."

"So it was last night, my dear, but he is quite altered since; altered within this hour, I assure you."

Meantime, Lionhart wondered to see Fitzroy bestow so much time upon a girl of such moderate personal attractions, compared to his Matilda; but, as he never questioned the wisdom of any of his friend's proceedings, he contented himself with concluding that she was possessed of some charms above his humble comprehension to discover. What it was attracted Strathallan so irresistibly to

Matilda, was considered as an equal enigma by Miss Langrish ; who, however desperate her case might have ever appeared in the eyes of others, always ascribed to Miss Melbourne's arrival at Woodlands, the total overthrow of all her plans. Lord Strathallan's behaviour to her was indeed the same as it had ever been. In it there was none of that common place and unfeeling gallantry in which, as a young man of fashion, he might have thought himself authorised to indulge towards a dependant, but too ready to misconstrue his slightest attention ; none of that haughty freedom or cold neglect, which, from the Countess, so painfully marked the difference of rank that existed between them. His manner, to her, respectful, considerate, and most scrupulously polite, was calculated, in the most effectual manner, at once to raise her consequence and to depress her hopes ; but nothing could entirely check the romantic forwardness of this misguided young woman, and his cheek was sometimes suffused with the glow of confusion, for the unthinking folly of her conduct, while conscious

there was nothing to cause him self-reproach or regret in his own.

Spencer, to do him justice, would not have willingly suffered the damsel to endure the mortification of neglect; but, when he found Matilda unwilling to attend to him, or Arbella otherwise engaged, would, if she had permitted it, rather than not keep himself in practice, have gladly flirted with the governess. But this young lady, whose passion, however absurd, had, at least, the merit of constancy and devotion to its object, regularly repulsed all such advances; and, in her heroic and decided preference of his brother, Spencer's vanity received a blow from the quarter whence he least expected it.

To see Matilda and Strathallan enjoying a species of happiness, of which she had no idea, and which she had no pretext for disturbing, oppressed her with a consuming envy, which destroyed her spirits, and threatened to undermine her health: the hope that some imprudence, on the part of one or the other, might enable her to prove this mutual friendship not so disinterested as was

supposed, was alone what supported her spirits; and a trifling circumstance aided by the sagacity of her good friend Miss Hautenville, soon afforded her the wished-for opportunity to communicate to the heart of the innocent Matilda, a part of the anguish which corroded her own. Matilda; left to herself one evening in the drawing-room, had taken up a book that she found under one of the pillows of the sofa from which Lady Torrendale had just risen. Though she had no great reverence for her Ladyship's taste in reading, she was surprised to find, in the guise of what she had hastily deemed a flimsy French novel, eloquence that captivated and entertained every feeling of her fancy and her heart. It was Chateaubriand's *Atala*; the book opened at the description of her flight with the American chief, whom she had delivered from the dreadful fate, that, a few hours before, awaited him.—“*Notre promenade fut presque muette. Je marchais a coté d'Atala. * * * Un regard tantôt levé vers le ciel, tantôt attaché a la terre, une oreille attentive au chant de l'oiseau, un geste vers le*

*soleil couchant ; * * * un sein tour à tour palpitant, tour a tour tranquille. Les noms de Chactas et d'Atala doucement répétés par intervalles. Oh ! premiere promenade de l'amour il faut que votre souvenir soit bien puissante, * * ** she had read thus far when she perceived, for the first time, that she was no longer alone.

Lord Strathallan was near her ; and by the manner in which he stood, his eye must have gone along the page with her's ; she paused ; in a bosom so completely devoid of art as Matilda's, it was easy to read every emotion that arose, as on a stream's limpid surface. It was easy to perceive that the passage she had been reading was associated in her mind, with some suddenly suggested and pleasing remembrance ; but one which she feared distinctly to recal. His Lordship did not follow up the advantage that memory or imagination seemed to be preparing for him in her heart. On the contrary, a slight shade of displeasure passed over his expressive features. " Are these your studies Miss Melbourne ?" he said.

Matilda assured him, with equal truth and simplicity, she had but that moment taken up the volume, which was new to her, and had fascinated her attention. She suffered him gently to take it out of her hand; and, restoring it to its place on the sofa, "as Lady Torrendale is reading this," he continued, "if you are fond of French literature, I will look among her books if I can find any thing equally attractive. Are you acquainted with the works of St. Pierre? You would be enchanted with his *Paul et Virginie*. Or no," replacing the book and taking down *Caroline de Lichtfield*, "here is a work, which I am sure you would like better. It is by a lady, and does honour to your sex and the age in which it was written."

Matilda, who had waited patiently during these doubts and hesitations, and submitted with the most passive acquiescence to his final decision, felt instantly assured she should like it better than any other book she could have chosen. The disparity of years between her and Mr. Sowerby was such, as to preclude a possibility of a conformity in

their tastes and pursuits; but Strathallan possessed just that superiority in age which gives an amiable man a pleasing ascendancy over a woman, young, ingenuous, and anxious for improvement. An involuntary deference to his opinions, a reliance on his experience, which she could not perhaps with sincerity have yielded, to one who was exactly her equal in age, blended a feeling of diffidence and timidity with the tenderness she felt only to render it more enchanting.

It was with such sentiments that she entered with avidity upon the perusal of a romance, that still perhaps, derived its principal recommendation from its being associated, in every page, with the idea of Strathallan. By those who have been accustomed to unbounded indulgence in this species of literature, it will hardly be believed that it was the first work of that description which Matilda had ever been permitted to read. It had been one of Mrs. Melbourne decided resolutions that, during the first years of youth, no novel, however interesting its story, however elegant its language, however

unexceptionable its tendency, should ever meet the eye of her daughter; and with a resolution of Mrs. Melbourne's, it had always been Matilda's custom to acquiesce without a murmur, or a regret. What was then her pleasure, when, with feelings unhacknied, emotions keen and pure as sensibility and the first morning of youth can give, she entered into the interest of a story in which she found sentiments and opinions, so often congenial to her own.

She closed the volume, her mind filled with a variety of sensations equally new and indescribable. The fascinating Caroline was the only subject on which she could willingly discourse. She admired the conduct of the story, she rejoiced in its happy termination; she envied the heroine—no, she did not envy her, for she did not know Strathallan, and with this idea, that of the book became comparatively insipid; she only wished to think of it that she might seek him, to know his opinion respecting it. In conversation with him, however, all Matilda's enthusiasm revived. She could not express the anxiety she felt at the

moment when the too generous Walstein, under the mistaken idea of ensuring his Caroline's happiness, hastened to complete the sacrifice, which would have rendered them both miserable for ever. "I assure you, my lord," she said, "I found it impossible to tear my eyes from the book during the time that cruel application for permission to part with her, was made by the Count to the great Frederick. The moment was so critical; the chances that many persons should be made unhappy, so great—my breath became suspended—I read with a degree of palpitation—if novels are sometimes blamed for not sufficiently engaging the attention, do not you think it is also a fault, when they are too—too interesting?"

Lord Strathallan smiled, "I wish Miss Melbourne I could read a novel as you do."

"Yet in this charming work," she continued, "there is, I own, one improbability that shocks me. It is that Caroline should, in Lindorf's society, almost forget the existence of Walstein, and suffer the stranger to gain such a hold over her affections, before

she discovered to him she was married to the Count. That any circumstance should banish from her mind a solemn engagement."

"Oh it was unpardonable," interrupted Strathallan, and again a slight cloud of discontent overshadowed his countenance. Matilda now, too watchfully attentive to its slightest variation, immediately turned the discourse to the character of Lindorf.—"I cannot forgive," she said, "his often-changing loves—who could value a heart that had first been offered to Louisa, then to Matilda, then to Caroline, then at length to Matilda again? 'Yet he acknowledges that in Matilda was centered all that was necessary to make him happy.' 'But what assurance have we of the continuance of these sentiments?' 'The best in the world; his own acknowledgment that he felt for her, the most fervent, fixed, and purest passion. You forget, I believe, his concluding words. I think I can repeat them, *J'ai été épris de Louise; J'ai adoré Caroline. Mais j'aime ma chère Matilde et je sens que c'est pour la vie;* his Lordship had concluded this sentence with an anima-

tion into which he had been gradually led by the subject, and an energy still farther enforced, by the expressive sweetness of a voice which, whether in speech or music, ever thrilled to Matilda's heart, before he recollected the accidental resemblance of the name to that of the person he addressed; the blushing confusion with which he was heard, first reminded him of this coincidence; and her eyes, quickly averted, told him that, in the earnestness of discourse, his had been imperceptibly suffered to indulge in too fixed, or too fond a gaze. Agitated beyond what she had ever before experienced, it appeared to Matilda that at this moment she heard Strathallan vow eternal love. The perturbation of her feelings seemed contagious. He caught her embarrassment and found it impossible to continue his discourse. Ashamed thus to act the novice where he had committed no intentional error of expression, Lord Strathallan was the first to endeavour to recover himself, and resume the topic that had so interested them the moment before. But the thoughts of each appeared so much

to wander ; the sentences were so broken, so interrupted, and, at length, degenerated into such absolute nonsense, that it was found both more pleasant and more improving, to seek the society of the general circle ; or, each separately to try to rally their spirits among the magic bowers, the grottoes and fountains of Woodlands, where it might be truly said in the language of the Italian bard :

“ Odi l'aura ch'è dolce sospira,
“ Mentre fugge scotendo le fronde,
“ Se l'intendi ti parli d'amor,
“ Senti l'onda che rauca s'agg'era,
“ Mentre geme radendo le sponde,
“ Se l'intendi ti lagna d'amor.”

CHAP. XX.

Oh maraviglia! Amor ch'appena è nato
Già grande vola, e già trionfa armato.

TASSO; GIERUSALEMME LIBERATA.

The keenest pangs the wretched find,
Are rapture to the dreary void,
That leafless desert of the mind,
That waste of feelings unemployed.

LORD BYRON; THE GIAOUR.

THE next morning Lady Torrendale, who dearly loved what she called a little mystification, sent for Matilda early to her chamber, and accosted her with "How now my little gipsey witch, what have you been doing to cause such a hurly-burly in the middle region of the air! Lionhart swears the candles always burn blue when you are in the room, and I begin to believe it. Yet I warn you, despise not the counsel of a more excellent

†

witch than yourself; beware of the light wings of Miss Langrish's eyes, dread the thunder-bolts of Miss Hautenville's tongue, and as for the Mountain, take care it does not turn out a Vesuvius."

Though used to a good deal of similar rhodomontade, in the pleasantries that each individual allowed themselves almost perpetually to act upon the others, at Woodlands; there was a laughing malice in her Ladyship's eyes, which seemed to announce to Matilda, that something more than common lurked beneath this violent shew of spirits: her nerves were not as strong as formerly, and rather startled and distressed, by the number of unpleasant images her livelier friend had huddled together in this strange address, she answered,

"I am surely a very insignificant object for indignation, so great as your Ladyship alludes to."

"Oh no—certainly Miss Melbourne is the most insignificant creature in company, wherever she appears. She never attracts the gaze of the most humble swain, or brings

home from the field a single prisoner; but at the same time, if ladies will listen, and if gentlemen will declare themselves—”

“ I assure you Madam,” said Matilda, filled with an uneasiness and alarm that she had never experienced before, “ you are misinformed if you imagine that—”

“ Nay, you will not deny that Strathallan has more than once declared himself—”

“ Permit me to assure you Madam—”

“ Dissatisfied with Spencer, and *ennuied* with his present situation—I mean, has he not said so to you? Come, own the truth.” Her Ladyship, after enjoying the perplexity into which her ambiguous phrases had thrown Matilda, and having sufficiently diverted herself with her heightened colour and increasing perturbation, continued, “ and now as I take your silence as a confession of his misdeeds, I will, in return for this amiable candour, reveal what has been plotting against you below stairs in ‘the cabal.’ You remember Miss Mountain’s praising the last sketch you made from those old family pictures, with her stately grace.”

“ Well, well, extremely well indeed.”

Here her Ladyship suddenly rose from her sofa, assumed Miss Mountain's stiff erectness, and looking down upon Matilda, mimicked her air so naturally, that it was impossible to repress a smile at the ill-natured correctness of the imitation. “ The moment you left the room, poor Miss Langrish, who, for this last month I believe, has felt all the inclination of Midas's wife, to whisper, if it was only to the reeds of the brook, some mighty secret with which she had been occupied, said, ‘ Oh Madam you would admire those pictures much more, if you knew the pretty scene that first gave occasion for their delineation.’ Upon being desired to explain herself, however, it only appeared that she and Miss Hautenville had one day found you and Lord Strathallan in the north parlour; that he had said nothing she could distinctly hear, but that she did not doubt he *had* said something; and Miss Hautenville was of the same opinion. At this moment in runs Miss Hautenville, quite out of breath, with a second edition, later than the

Langrish Gazette, containing overtures of accommodation that had actually been made by the enemy, and though the terms had been proposed in French, yet as that is the general language of congress, there was little doubt but that they must be understood. You, my little friend, had not noticed her being deeply engaged with Lord Strathallan, discussing the merits of Caroline, (*apropos* why did he give you that old stuff?) he might have found Werter or Oberon—did you ever see Oberon?—they are both upon the same line. ‘However,’ as poor Miss Langrish says, he did not—and you thought Caroline a very fine thing, I suppose, and were just telling him so, for I am sure I have heard of nothing else these two days, when poor Miss Hautenville, who knew of no Matilda in the world but Miss Melbourne, interpreted the words Strathallan used in reply, into a most formal declaration to said Matilda.”

“ You are very good Madam, so immediately to advert to what must have been the origin of this ridiculous mistake. I did not indeed perceive Miss Hautenville was so near

us, but whatever might have been her conjectures, why should they affect Miss Mountain?"

"Why? because," to give you a lady's reason—"but to reply to your question more seriously, for my charming Matilda should not be put off with a 'because,' is it necessary that she should ask whether Miss Mountain can find it agreeable, that the general conversation should run upon the attentions received by another from the man to whom she is engaged."

"Engaged!" Matilda repeated, 'scarce conscious of what she said.

"Yes, she chose it should not be talked of, and made that, a condition of her visit to me this summer—but you may remember I made one exception in your favour," continued her Ladyship, nodding with an air of assumed friendliness and confidence, "I could conceal nothing from my Matilda."

"You surely never told me Madam that—"

"Indeed I did my dear, in this dressing-room, when I announced her expected arri-

val. I called her 'my daughter-in-law that shall be.'"

This could not be denied. Yet Miss Melbourne thought she saw at that moment a something in the countenance of Lady Torrendale, that shewed she noticed her confusion, and enjoyed her mistake. Was it possible? Could she be one of those whose delight is to betray the unsuspecting; one of those malignant and misleading spirits, that

"Palter with us in a double sense,

"That keep the word of promise to our ear,

"And break it to our hope."

She would not admit the idea; and listened in a silence which had hardly the merit of being voluntary, while her Ladyship continued, "Miss Mountain, in every thing truly original is, though a tremendous flirt in her peculiar manner, in some circumstances full as great a prude. That Lord Strathallan should be known to the whole circle of giddy young people assembled round me, to be on the terms of an accepted lover, was, in her opinion, a thing the most highly indecorous that could be imagined. She insisted on our

observing an inviolable silence to every one on the subject, till the happy event should take place; a discretion in which she herself led the way on the most trying occasion you know, Matilda; and it must be owned, that since his return, she has been admirably seconded by Strathallan, who has forborne to assume any of the privileges of a lover, particularly lately, with a self-denial truly edifying. Fearful, if she made no remark, of being suspected by the Countess to be too much interested in this communication, Matilda observed, "Miss Mountain's fortune certainly made this a most desirable connection."

"Certainly, my dear, for she unites in that little person of her's, the possessions of her own family, and of Strathallan's.—I will tell you how. You have heard, I dare say, once or twice of Miss Mountain's estates 'on the maternal side.' Now the late Lady Strathallan's father married a Bishop—no that was not it, the late Lady Strathallan's mother was a Dean. I must begin again, I am certainly the worst person in the world

to tell a story about "Sir Archy's Grandmother." In short, Lady Strathallan and Mrs. Mountain were cousins. Mrs. Mountain who was, you know, one of the Bishops of Craig Castle, was as poor as a church mouse, till by the caprice of a whimsical grandfather, a fortune which passed over the head of Lady Bishop her mother, became eventually her's, to dispose of as she pleased. Now, if things had been properly arranged, this fortune would never have been either Lady Bishop's, or Mrs. Mountain's; but Lady Strathallan's; because——if the estate had been left to Lady Strathallan——Lady Strathallan would have had the estate. I hope you perfectly comprehend me——No?——I am certainly the most unlucky creature——no woman in England has a clearer head for business, and yet I never can make myself understood. I am sure it was as plain as possible, as I have heard Torrendale explain it to me.

"Mrs. Mountain and Lady Strathallan had been bred up at school together, and loved each other more as sisters than cousins. Mrs.

Mountain was desirous of making Lady Strathallan amend for the injustice in the disposal of the fortune, which, as the daughter of the eldest sister, she might suppose herself to have suffered; and it was agreed, that if Strathallan married—that if Miss Mountain married—that is to say if Strathallan married Miss Mountain, it would settle every thing to their mutual satisfaction. This plan which had amused the mothers, during the infancy of their children, was, after the death of Mrs. Mountain, seriously taken up by the old Don, who was anxious to secure a noble alliance for his daughter; and Torrendale, who had been rather disappointed in his wife, in the article of fortune, readily, after he became a widower, entered into the schemes of the old gentleman, an engagement took place between the young people when they were sixteen, but the marriage was, on account of their extreme youth, deferred: and owing to Strathallan's going early into the army, and his father's strange whim, of letting him pass a great deal of time at his Scotch estate, he saw little of his fair cousin; so I invited her

down to the country, that he might get a little more familiarized to her idea. She is, at first, rather alarming; but that is all *écorce*; and we shall accustom him to her ways, as he accustoms his horse to stand fire, by snapping a pistol at his ear every day, till he learns to bear it without starting.

“ Now, though I have entered into this detail with you,” continued her Ladyship, taking Matilda’s hand with a friendly familiarity, “ because I abhor concealments, and like above all things, to be open and direct in every thing, do not think, my dear Miss Melbourne, that I imagine you require the least hint respecting the manner in which, as to an engaged man, you ought to conduct yourself towards Lord Strathallan; it has always been, believe me, exactly what I wished, and though I diverted myself a little this morning with the idea of throwing you into alarm, I knew perfectly well that you had no real grounds for apprehension. Miss Hautenville may die for envy, Miss Langrish for love; but depend upon my authority,

and it is the only official one, there is no harm done."

"I should be sorry, indeed," Matilda interrupted faintly, "to be the cause of any misunderstanding between Lord Strathallan and Miss Mountain."

"Miss Mountain! will you never know that phoenix, that fair perfection, for whom little Sappho said the word *self-sufficient* in its most literal sense, should have been invented. Her pride would not allow her to believe a report, or even to listen to an inward whisper, of his negligence. I shall never forget the cool composure with which she heard the account of the two angry ladies, and then, observing after she had let them exhaust themselves in doubts and conjectures the whole evening, that Lord Strathallan paid the most delicate compliment to her feelings, in reining in the ardour of his passion, and bestowing his attentions, 'as she had commanded' him upon indifferent objects, she lit a taper, and with a low curtsy, which put her nearly on their level, wished them a

very good night. Poor girls, they looked so foolish! They were mistaken indeed in Miss Mountain, when they thought to alarm her jealousy. Jealousy supposes a diffidence of success, and she would not change places with an angel, or a Matilda. She exactly reminds me of a character in some play, that says, I would not be a bit taller, a bit shorter, a bit younger, a bit older, a bit handsomer, a bit wiser, or in short any other than what I am. She is the most eccentric creature in nature, and this self-opinion is the cause of all her eccentricities; she is a bundle of contradictions, and they all spring from the same source. She is a prudish flirt, and a flirting prude; and, while she severely censures the most innocent freedoms in others, or even imagines them where they are not, will go the strangest lengths herself, because, it is sufficient to impart to them all propriety and grace, that 'twas the great Miss Mountain did so.' That every thing she does is 'wisest, virtuouslest, discreetest, best,' is out of all question."

Matilda would at another time have smiled

at the fidelity of this ludicrous portrait ; she now only gravely replied, " I shall soon be out of the reach of her animadversions, if she is inclined to make any ;" and retired as soon as possible to hide those tears that a thousand mingled circumstances at length forced to flow. No sooner did she find herself in the garden, and at liberty, than clasping her hands together in an agony, till now faintly repressed, she tried to arrange her confused ideas ; to recover from the dizziness, the stupor into which they had been thrown, by the too sudden discovery of the precipice on which she stood. She doubted whether she did not dream ; but every painful particular of the late conversation was already but too indelibly imprinted on her mind. After a long drawn sigh, at length an exclamation burst involuntarily from her lips : " Oh, I am very unhappy !" she cried ; and miserable as she had been before, this confession, wrung from her by the resistless vehemence of internal feeling, seemed to have broken down the slight barrier between her and the torrent of anguish, that now overwhelmed her soul with

irresistible violence. Unwilling to attribute her present wretchedness entirely to herself, her first emotion was one of resentment against Strathallan; but repenting, in a moment, of her injustice, she recalled the whole of his conduct, since the commencement of an intercourse that had terminated so fatally to her peace; and found it equally vain to attempt to attribute to him, error, or deceit. The engagement with Miss Mountain was certainly kept secret; but had he not repeatedly given her to understand, that from the perfect confidence Lady Torrendale seemed to repose in her, he was sure she was acquainted with every circumstance relating to his family; and could he be supposed to except one so intimately connected with his future interest and happiness? Had he not always, in their most unguarded and delightful conversations, preserved the character of friend, instructor, guide, and, if any softer feeling seemed for a moment to intrude, had he not repressed it with a caution, sometimes greater than her own? Was it possible for a heart like his, to witness unhappiness,

springing from whatever source, unmoved? He had consoled her when dejected; defended her when calumniated; had encouraged her timidity, and dispelled her anxieties.

“ These were thy crimes, Strathallan,” she repeated, “ these were the gentle acts which my fond forgetful folly misconstrued into love. Is he to blame if the friendship of Strathallan has a fascinating character beyond the love of other men? Ah, no! he is all excellence, and I have only myself to accuse.—”

To accuse! And was it even thus with Matilda, must she too submit to that tyranny, which, changing the whole course of the thoughts and feelings, refers every action to a different standard; bids each emotion, no longer subject to controul, move round a new circle; makes virtue no longer find reward in its own approval; application no longer satisfied with its own success; but, placing its devoted victim in an unknown scene, thrown on a new earth; breathing beneath a new sky; bids every happiness depend upon the will, the wishes, the feelings of another; makes pleasure no longer pleasing, unless

shared with him ; praise no longer sweet, unless flowing from his lips. The discovery that Strathallan was lost to her, had taught her that he was essential to the happiness of her existence. But at the same time, she had learned, that she could not with innocence indulge any longer in the delightful visions, with which, till now, his image had been invested : for a few moments these silent shades witnessed a conflict, perhaps, the most severe that human nature in youth, and without direction or support, can be exposed to. But Matilda was never without support ; and recalling those sentiments of mingled dignity and resignation which had always marked her character, she felt an instantaneous calm returning to her soul. Raising her eyes to heaven in modest confidence, she preferred a short mental prayer, and pressing her hands upon her breast, now no longer tortured with tempestuous passion, she remembered, as she bent forward, the affectionate admonition she had but that day received from her beloved parent, and which she had there, as in a sanctuary deposited, to

be ever near her. She took out the paper, and bedewing it with tears of grateful tenderness; "where were those counsels," she said, "when I suffered myself to be misled thus far? In what a waking dream I have lately lived! why did I not hold them ever in my remembrance? No, kindest, truest friend," she continued, as she re-perused the lines with fond attention; "I deserve my sufferings, for have I not broken the promise my heart made to you? In the day of surprise and affliction, that day in which I was first torn from your maternal breast, my tears silently engaged to devote the interval till your return to fond anticipation, or tender regret. But I suffered a stranger to break in upon your right. I preferred a wild delusive meteor, to the pure pleasures springing from that earliest, most enchanting feeling of our nature, in the indulgence of which alone, there is neither error nor excess; these sighs, these conflicts, do they not sufficiently avenge you? Oh, let me renew that engagement that gives every future thought of my heart to you!"

While engaged in reflections thus alter-

nately soothing and self-condemning, their course was abruptly interrupted by the sudden appearance of Miss Swanley, who advanced with a paper in her hand, on which it was evidently her intention to consult Miss Melbourne. It was a Sonnet she had just composed, and Matilda, ever averse to such confidence, was never less in train for them than now. Escape was, however, impossible; and Matilda prepared to meet her with her usual smile of cheerful benevolence, not foreseeing the pain this casual interview was soon to cause her. "Verses I see Miss Swanley," she said, and knowing the request that was always expected to follow this observation, added, "may I not be favoured with a sight of them?"

"I sought you for that purpose," the poetess replied with her accustomed frankness, "I own I should wish Miss Melbourne's opinion before I read them to the general circle. You may remember I once said I meditated a Sonnet to the shade of departed love, and promised to repeat it to you: this

sequestered scene appears peculiarly adapted to the purpose."

Sappho then, without farther entreaty, and with a fire and sensibility, sooner to be expected in an enthusiastic *fantastici*, than the sober daughter of a country clergyman in England, recited the following

SONNET.

I sighed for peace—mid passion's fevered heat
How pleasing seemed her long-forgotten balm !
" Return," I said, " this aching breast to calm
And bid my throbbing heart no longer beat."
Such was imagination's fond deceit.
Peace came ; and passion's meteor-visions fled :
Hushed was my lyre ; to grief, to transport dead ;
No more its chords Eugenio's name repeat.
Sick with the breezeless calm, full soon I cried,
" Fierce is the thorn of Love ; but sweet the rose,
Again, sweet power, o'er all my soul preside,
Heartless I pine in languid, dull repose."
Vain wish ! the guest that once I dared to spurn,
Love, and his lovely train, will never more return.

" Am I to consider you as expressing your real sentiments, Miss Swanley?" said Matilda.

“ Oh, heavens ! that a person who had once experienced the dangerous illusions of passion should ever wish to renew them : I think the enviable calm you describe, no object, however worthy, should ever tempt me to renounce.”

“ A worthy object ! Oh, Miss Melbourne, have you already learnt to talk like a person of this world ? It is the passion itself, with all its charms, its sweet illusions, I regret. That only feeling, which, in our present state, can entirely satisfy the heart, because it doubles its possession, can be experienced in all its vigour, force, and purity, but once. Do you consider it merely as an elegant commonplace, and overlook the refined and too painfully important truth, conveyed in the Poet’s beautiful expression :

“ ‘ Young passion’s tender bloom ? ’ ”

What other does it mean, than that bloom of the soul, the enchanting freshness of those first emotions, which, like the dew drops of the morning, once brushed away, can never more return. Often,” continued the fair

Sophist, after this ingenious commentary, " would I willingly recall, if, but for a moment, those impressions in vain—like the brilliant, but evanescent colours of some early dream, they fade the more completely the more I endeavour to retrace them, and each succeeding effort but the more painfully convinces me the youth of my heart is gone."

Matilda listened in silence, but not with perfect approbation. She admired the genius of the enthusiastic visionary maid ; yet still she felt there was in its most bewitching wanderings, a something her best friends would wish altered : Sappho expressed her feelings with eloquence and grace ; but there was a want of that retiring timidity, more graceful than their most eloquent expression. This deficiency could not but be remarked by one, who was herself an example of the rare and difficult art of uniting true feminine delicacy, with an unaffected nobleness of thinking, which was without effort and without pride ; that dignity of sentiment and steadiness of principle which generally distinguishes matured years, or elevated station alone, breathing

from the lips of cherub innocence, simplicity, and youth. Possessing that *tact* which both her Sappho and *Celia* wanted, she regretted in the character of the former, to observe that the absence of that golden quality, discretion, lessened the lustre of talents, and diminished the grace of sentiments, noble, exalted, and delicate, as her's. For still, notwithstanding all the condemning forms, and sneering whispers of grave matrons, or prim damsels, there were few minds so delicate as Sappho's. She was all passion, because she was all purity. Ever considering love under its highest, most interesting aspect, she ventured to express, respecting it, the sentiments of a soul glowing with generous enthusiasm. Believing every mind pure and ingenuous as her own, repeated disappointments had not taught her that necessary lesson of caution and reserve, which alone could make her uncommon endowments ensure respect to herself, or advantage to others. As it was, those distinguished talents were only (to borrow Madamé de Staël's forcible expression) *d'une noble inutilité*—or served as

most to enliven the social circle, or to contribute to the acquisition of an ephemeral literary reputation.

But a few days ago the conversation she had heard, and the picture that had been presented to her of the charms that attend even the torments of a passion such as Sappho described, might not have been without danger for Matilda; but love now appeared to her only in the form of a malignant demon, and in discovering to her the full extent of his power, had inspired her with a terror of its consequences.

“I consult you in preference to Miss Ferrars,” continued Sappho, resuming the subject of her poem, “because there is in your manner something that more invites to confidence. She is not, like the Countess, troubled with patrician pride, it would be extraordinary indeed if she were; but of the pride of wealth and independence she has, unknowingly to herself perhaps, some small share—I mean that kind of confidence which makes her ready to give her opinion on every subject, careless whether it may soothe or hurt the

feelings of others. With all her good nature I am never sure whether a degree of triumph does not mingle with her condolences on any mortification I experience; for I have often thought, even when she has praised me, there was a kind of a—— you will not comprehend me, Miss Melbourne—a manner that seemed to say, it was less for the possession of — a—talent, than for the want of—other advantages that she sought and liked me. An air that expressed ‘Yes, you can write, that I allow. Take care how you step out of your province, and attempt to please.’ Now do you not think,” continued Sappho, observing Matilda was silent, “that such praise is very insulting? I have often left her company, vexed and angry with all around me, and yet if I had repeated her conversation, nothing could have appeared more obliging, or more flattering.”

Matilda had often tried to correct this fault in her friend, and had one day asked her, in a playful manner, if it was not common with her to extol others for that in which they excelled the least, or to applaud them for

qualities they really possessed in a manner, that made them discontented with that possession ; but before she had time to reply to Sappho's observations, the sudden appearance of Lord Strathallan, crossing the walk through which they were passing, startled Miss Melbourne, without awakening in her bosom an emotion of pleasure. That aspect, but lately so beloved, for the first time failed to breathe peace and joy into her heart. He glanced his eye for a moment on her companion, and his countenance exhibited an uneasy and singular expression, which it would have been difficult immediately to account for, or define. But the time was past when Matilda's heart could vibrate unimproved, to every variation in the countenance of Strathallan.

Hastening her approach to the house, she found Lady Torrendale still in her dressing room. She purposely spent a good deal of time with that lady ; to efface from her mind, if possible, any impression that the too obvious agitation she had betrayed in the morning might have left there. Through the day, in an exaltation of mind, a kind of

delirium, between the triumph of virtue, and the intruding consciousness of overwhelming misery, she tried to occupy herself more than usual with every thing that surrounded her. To interest herself in the conversation of the Countess, the complaints of Arbella, the employments of Lady Emily, in short, as she too often repeated to herself in the eloquent simplicity of nature and the heart; "Any thing, every thing, but Strathallan."

He, on the contrary, had never seemed so anxious to engage her attention; but she eluded his efforts so ingeniously, that evening was arrived, and nothing, but a few common place words, such as were called forth by the usual forms of daily intercourse, had passed between them. At length, seeing a place unoccupied on the sofa on which she sat, he approached it, Matilda arose to leave it. "Do not let me scare you from your seat, Miss Melbourne," he said, "and I am gone." She could not, in common politeness, testify any farther impatience at his presence; she let him place himself next her, but he now seemed uncertain how to avail himself of the

privilege he had been so anxious to obtain, and for a few moments both were silent. "I have hardly spoken to you, Miss Melbourne," he said, "since I saw you with—"

"Miss Swanley; we had had a long conversation."

Lord Strathallan hesitated. "You—you find her pleasant?"

"I think her a delightful companion."

"So should I—for any one but Miss Melbourne."

Matilda made no reply. She would have formerly felt complimented by this observation; but now—perhaps it was a snare—perhaps it was still sincere; at all events, was it not immaterial to her? The opinion of Strathallan was no longer to be of any value to her.

"I hope you understand me," he pursued, after a pause. "I admire Miss Swanley's genius, but it is obscured by her eccentricities. In the favoured intimates of Miss Melbourne, I should always wish to see dignity, elegance of mind and manner, like her own. I know Sappho has many pleasing

qualities ; but a female character, to borrow an expression in painting that you once taught me, requires ‘ finishing off in small strokes :’ it is to those finer shades, those minuter touches, it owes its distinctive charm ; and do you not perceive the want of these, in your intercourse with Miss Swanley ?” He looked in her eyes for a reply, with an expression of the tenderest yet most respectful anxiety in his own.

A few hours before, Matilda would have received such an intimation, with gratitude and secret pleasure. But her interview with Lady Torrendale had opened her eyes to the danger of her situation. Strathallan was nothing to her, was never to be more than he was at present ; yet did not his manner suppose an influence over her conduct ?—a right, or a desire, to direct her wishes and pursuits ? She remembered her mother’s remark to her on similar behaviour in another. She felt indignant at the idea of her feelings being trifled with ; and for a moment she dared to suspect Strathallan, the noble Strathallan, of intentional deceit. “ My adviser, too !” she

proudly whispered. "Ungenerous man! you shall know your power is not as great as you perhaps imagine:" and turning from him, she drily replied, "that she conceived any young ladies she met at Lady Torrendale's must be proper companions for her, and that she had not observed any thing in Miss Swanley's conduct to contradict the good opinion she had formed of her."

Strathallan looked at her for a moment in surprise—"I have done, Madam," he said; and rising, approached the table, where his mother and Arbella were seated.

Matilda had prepared herself for an argument. She waited a moment, irresolute, in expectation of something that should follow these words, which though conclusive, were not satisfactory. In vain;—through the rest of the evening, Lord Strathallan spoke little to her, or to any one else; but he appeared deeply hurt. She was confused; a secret feeling (it could not be remorse) mingled with her dissatisfaction. She recollected that the discovery which had made such a revolution in her own mind, could not be

supposed new to her by Strathallan. *Her* conduct had changed to *him*; but *his* was only in conformity with that constant attention, that watchful tenderness, with which, like a superior, and almost guardian spirit, he had till now been ever eager to preserve her from aught that might injure, aught that might give her pain. The manner in which Strathallan received this unexpected repulse, added to the poignancy of these reflections. It had none of the resentment that might flow from offended pride; none of the submission that might bespeak a consciousness that it was deserved. The expression of injured friendship, of feelings wrung by the sudden appearance of caprice and unkindness, in her whose welfare had so warmly interested them, was all that was painted on his too eloquent countenance.

Matilda saw that she had given pain to Strathallan—to Strathallan, whose delight it ever seemed, to give joy to all. She asked her heart, in what instance he deserved it of her?—her heart acquitted him of every

crime, but that of being too much beloved. The conviction that he suffered, filled her bosom with equal wretchedness ; yet-what she had said was the result of principle, and she could not at the moment—no, she wished not, to retract.

CHAP. XXI.

Two maxims she could still produce,
And sad experience taught their use;
That virtue, pleas'd by being shown,
Knows nothing that it dare not own;
That common forms were not design'd
Directors to a noble mind.

"Now," said the nymph, "I'll let you see
My actions with those rules agree,
That I can vulgar forms despise,
And have no secrets to disguise."

SWIFT.

"I WISH to have a little serious conversation with you, Lady Torrendale," said his Lordship one morning, as he entered her dressing-room at an unusually early hour.

"That friendship you have formed with—"

"Matilda," interrupted the Countess eagerly—"Well, have I not won the wager I laid last year?"

“ That you would be as fond of Miss Melbourne as you were then, that day twelve-month? No, Lady Torrendale; you are very far from having won the wager: it took place towards the latter end of October;—July, August, September, October—it still wants three months, three weeks, and two days, of the given time.—It was not of that I was going to speak, but of Mrs. Stockwell; that Scythian becomes every day more insupportable.”

“ Is Scythian, my Lord, the best name you have for her? If you will have it my poor friend is a barbarian, it is certainly better than Parthian; for then, you know, she would wound you as she fled.”

“ So she fled, I should little care whether she wounded me or not. Your attachment to Miss Melbourne at least can do you no discredit. She is a dignified young woman, a young woman such as now is seldom met with. How much is it to be regretted that many more do not resemble her. But for the other—”

“ Well, enough of Matilda,” exclaimed

her Ladyship. "What is the good of recapitulating her merits, now we must lose her? For lose her we must, whether they send for her to town, or return to the country."

"True—it was not on that subject I intended to speak. You are, Lady Torrendale——what was I going to say when you interrupted me? You are, if I may allow myself the familiar expression, extremely new-fangled in your attachments. What else can account for that little Alcæus, so lately your aversion, being now——"

"Oh, I am persuaded my patronage of Alcæus will do me honour. The young man has real genius. The last lines he wrote upon my birth-day shewed a degree of talent that——Besides, in this strange place, how could I possibly amuse myself without my Sappho and Alcæus?"

"I have no objection to Sappho; that is a harmless folly. But for that little, insufferable coxcomb, to have him calling you 'Contessa, Contessa,' as he always does, and waltzing with you every evening——"

"He calls me Contessa to keep up my Italian, which I have begun to study with such success; and as to the waltzing, I declare I never can sleep without a few turns after supper."

"You may treat the matter as lightly as you please, Lady Torrendale; but it is my unalterable opinion, that such familiarities lessen your respectability, and are neither consistent with the dignity of your age, or character."

Character was very well; but the unguarded term, age, which just preceded it, undid the whole effect of his Lordship's well-intended admonition. Concealing her resentment under an appearance of well-assumed scorn, his Lady replied, "Since you allow that my age is so respectable, it is surely sufficient to protect my character against any remarks, that the unimportant freedoms you mention might occasion: therefore, while you preserve *your* opinion unaltered, you must allow me the privilege of also retaining *mine*."

"I see you are offended. Yet there is

another subject to which I must recur——
Stop, Lady Torrendale, that Scythian—that
Stockwell——”

Remonstrance was vain ; the Countess had already left the room : and his Lordship was obliged to defer his protest against this domestic pest, for another opportunity. Her frequent visits, and the respect and distinction with which she was often treated by Spencer and Lady Torrendale, were growing more and more irksome to him : but his deliverance was nearer at hand than he imagined ; though it took place in a manner he perhaps neither wished nor expected.

After dinner, Miss Mountain happened to be haranguing, in her manner, on the excellent dignity of her family by the maternal side. Strathallan, who was himself of descent too noble, ever to dwell upon that advantage, thought to turn the stream of his fair cousin's eloquence, by jocosely defying her to prove that it was equally ancient with Lord Torrendale's. The challenge was accepted seriously by Miss Mountain ; who, with all her respect for the house of Torren-

dale, would not have yielded the claims of her own, to that of Bourbon.

"Come, bet on both sides, that's fair," cried the poet Alcæus, who for the last five minutes had been kept in painful silence: "Miss Ferrars and I for Miss Mountain—Miss Melbourne and Sappho for Lord Strathallan. Come, fair ladies, cannot you wager like the Caliph and Zobeide in the Arabian Nights; your 'Palace of PICTURES' to her 'Garden of Pleasures,'" glancing with delighted malice from Matilda to Arbella.

"Picters and Pleasures!" repeated Mrs. Stockwell, who remarked the confusion he had created. "Well, to be sure, Mr. Who'll-see-us, you have, as my niece Arbella says, a comical way of coming across whatever is going on, with your 'two eggs a penny.' Now, I dare say, you have made Miss Mountain forget the whole line of her pedigree. 'Tis so like a dispute I once had with the poor Dichess of Albemarle. She never would give up to me in pint of family, till I said to her one day, 'Your Grace, it's a folly to talk. Your grandfeather was a

Duke—very well; my grandfeather was an Archbishop—Grace for Grace.' Poor woman! we never had any more dispute ever after."

Spencer, who had listened to this illustration with an appearance of great indifference and unconcern, now began amusing himself with a table sonata, to which he hummed, as if accidentally, part of the air of "Don't you remember a Carpet-Weaver."

Mrs. Stockwell's eyes flashed fire; "I expect very well what that gentleman would be at. But let him beware—he knows I'm not bound to submit either to his taunts or his tantarums."

A sudden demand from Lord Torrendale, for an explanation of the threat contained in this remark, soon produced from the enraged lady the long-dreaded *eclaircissement*. She was too much agitated, to give the particulars of Lady Torrendale's obligations to her with great perspicuity at the moment; but his Lordship, in an ensuing conversation, learnt with dismay and astonishment, that the supposed imprudences of his Lady were

all occasioned by her false tenderness for her son. That it was on his account she had drawn upon him for those immense sums, which, before their departure from Rose-Villa, she had allowed him to think the discharge of her own debts of honour rendered necessary. That when he had refused any longer to supply her, the accommodation offered by Mrs. Stockwell had rendered her acquaintance unavoidable, and her resentment to be feared.

Lord Torrendale could not easily forgive his lady for having concealed from him an evil, which if he had been made acquainted with at its commencement might have been easily checked. He upbraided her for thus voluntarily involving him in connexions he despised, and sacrificing the peace and dignity of his family, to the false principle of postponing the acknowledgment of a painful truth; a principle which was sure to terminate in added embarrassment and distress.

To none was this degrading discovery more unexpected,—by none was it more poignantly felt, than by Strathallan. He

knew his brother had been guilty of imprudences, but till now had no idea of their extent. Concealing, out of tenderness to Fitzroy, the deep wound it gave to every feeling of his lofty and delicate mind, his first object seemed to be to consult on the most effectual means to assist him to satisfy every claim that might be made upon him by his vulgar and rapacious creditor. For this important end, no sacrifice was considered by him as too great. All he intreated of his father was, to allow him to resign without delay, in favour of Spencer, every expectation, every claim, that could interfere with the interests of his honour, or his final extrication from embarrassments equally unnecessary and distressing. "Let the estate of Strathallan be his," he said; "it is more than sufficient to enable him to release himself from all his obligations: or, if it be necessary, let that woman take it—let her take all, so she leaves us the possession of conscious rectitude, and self-respect."

Notwithstanding the warmth which accompanied these generous instances of his

son—instances which were ably seconded by arguments from the Countess; notwithstanding the difficulties of the moment, Lord Torrendale preserved coolness and presence of mind enough, to declare his unalterable determination, not to sacrifice the worthier, for the unworthier part of his family.

Hurt that it was not in his power to do more, Strathallan objected to this resolution with a vehemence, and pleaded his right to a voice in the disposal of this estate, with an earnestness, which he seldom used in opposition to his parent. He and Spencer seemed to have, on this occasion, made common cause, and to have an equal interest in the sale of the lands of Strathallan.

His Lordship contented himself with telling them they were both unthinking impetuous young men, who looked not beyond the present moment; and then turning more particularly to his younger son, he set before him, in colours that would have made an impression upon any mind less light and volatile than his, the dangers into which his imprudence had led him; and told him, that

he had now nothing farther to hope, but to retrieve, by a rigid economy, the effects of his former extravagance.

Spencer, after looking down in vain at his boots, and finding they would not help him out with an answer, contented himself with replying, "that economy was a perfect bore; that he felt satisfied his Lordship, upon reflection, would be aware that a certain income was necessary to enable him to 'represent,' in the manner that became a branch of the Torrendale family; and that if it could not be made up in one way, it must in another."

The ease and composure of the offending Spencer, who had heard the whole discussion with the calmness of a person wholly unconnected with it, was singularly contrasted with the agitation of his generous brother; who, convinced of the impossibility of moving Lord Torrendale, had desisted from his proposal, yet showed by his heightened colour, and the anxious earnestness that had animated his voice and manner, how much

he was pained and surprised by this refusal.

The Countess took it upon a higher tone. She urged, perhaps not without some degree of justice, that her being found innocent of the extravagance, till now imputed to her, ought to be accepted as some mitigation of the other charge brought against her—a blameable indulgence shewn to the faults of a beloved and only son. She declared she could not forget those reproaches, till Lord Torrendale made some apology for his unwarrantable warmth; and that, till he became reasonable, and acceded to *her's and Strathallan's wish*, which could alone ensure future comfort to her poor ill used Spencer, she should no longer consider herself as mistress of his house, but beg leave to remain in the retirement and solitude of her own apartment.

The family group broke up with feelings of mutual discontent. Her Ladyship, either from obstinacy or pique, maintained her resolution of remaining a voluntary prisoner,

admitting no one to her privacy but Matilda; who, though she spent much of her time with her, in the hope of bringing her round to more pacific resolutions, yet anxiously awaited the moment which should recal her from a scene, that, when gayest, had failed in securing her lasting satisfaction; but which, now that it had become an abode of discord, was painful indeed. Arbella quitted Woodlands with her aunt on the night of the angry explanation, which had left Lord Torrendale in a state of such irritation with the family, that Matilda concluded her friend would not like to revive his unpleasant sensations, by too hasty a return. Accustomed as she was to Arbella's caprices, she was still therefore a little surprised to find her the following morning in her room, which that young lady had entered by her favourite leap; and approaching her with eyes sparkling with pleasure, insisted upon having, "five minutes gossip with her."

Without farther preface she began, "You know, my dear, this terrible *fracas* has made me the happiest creature in the world." Be-

fore Matilda had time to enquire into the nature of this great felicity, she continued, "Now my dear little charming Spencer is completely ruined—*de fond en comble*—is it not so?"

"I hope not."

"Why is it not evidently so? My aunt and her precious son have been plotting together to pursue him with the utmost rigour of their hatred; that is on one side preparing for him; on the other, his father, I hear, will do nothing for him; so is he not absolutely without resource?"

Matilda admitted the inference; yet still was at a loss to conceive how such a circumstance should cause the supreme satisfaction Arbella seemed to derive from it.

"Why there is no way of its being settled otherwise, is there?" pursued her friend peevishly, as if vexed that her position could not be made out quite so clearly as she wished.

"None, I fear, except by the sale of the Strathallan estate."

"Pho! pho! put Strathallan out of your

head for a moment, and tell me, don't you know of any other estate that might equally relieve him?"

"Indeed, Miss Ferrars, I do not," replied Matilda; trying, in vain, to conceal the pain inflicted by this thoughtless sally of her friend, "You must explain yourself more clearly."

Arbella looked a little confused at this; then, raising her eyes from the table, on which she had been, for a few moments, making several very pretty hieroglyphics with her finger, she began—"While the advantage in point either of rank or fortune is on the man's side, a woman should of course conceal, at least, as much as possible; I mean, any preference she may feel for him, until he has given her the most positive and unequivocal testimonies of his regard: But where the reverse happens to be the case, and the power of obliging devolves upon the woman, it becomes then her duty—don't you think so?"

"To do what?"

"How affectingly slow you are to-day! I

am sure I have expressed myself as intelligibly as possible—why to spare the generous delicacy of her lover to be sure, by the frank, unhopèd-for offer, of her hand and fortune.”

Matilda’s eyes were opened at once to the danger into which her friend’s precipitancy was hurrying her—“Stop, I entreat you, my dearest Arbella,” she said, “and weigh well the consequences of a step, which, if once taken, you might wish to recal in vain. You talk of the love of Captain Fitzroy—tell me truly, before this unfortunate circumstance, did he ever make you any express declaration of his attachment?”

“Why I cannot say he exactly did—not exactly;” returned Arbella; who now began twisting the string of her ridicule in a brisk circular motion around her wrist, “but a thousand and a thousand times his eyes have told me tantamount; those eyes that know so well every varied expression in love’s harmonious language, from the *crescendo*, *forte*, *rinforzando*, of persuasive ardour, to the *languendo*, *smorfioso*, *rallentando*, *smorzando*, *morendo*, of despair and death.”

“Treacherous indexes, my Arbella, on which to venture the honour and repose of your future life. ’Twas but lately, you force me to remind you of it, you complained, and with reason, of his conduct; and do you not perceive, that should he now, for the first time, seem grateful, as you expect, for your partiality, the real dictates of his heart run the risk of being mistaken for the result of a change of circumstance; and should he act otherwise—Oh, Arbella! can you, can I bear the idea that my friend should be rejected?—”

“I now *perceive* the whole,” interrupted Miss Ferrars with warmth, “you like him too well yourself, to wish I should be preferred. Weak that I was to imagine any one could enjoy a daily intercourse with him and escape that enchantment—that”—

“How painfully contradictory are your accusations,” resumed Matilda, turning on Arbella a look which breathed the softest expressions of injured tenderness. She would not give up the hope of saving her friend, yet where was she to find arguments suffi-

ciently powerful to influence her? She could not, alas! now, as on a former occasion, alledge Fitzroy's supposed engagement—"Reflect, my generous Arbella," at length she said, "before you pursue the first impulses of your warm and affectionate heart, whether those it addresses resemble it. A woman trusts her happiness to a dangerous hazard, in being the first to declare her attachment, even where she is sure of meeting disinterestedness, tenderness, delicacy equal to her own. But where she is not, think what would be your sensations, if the proofs of your artless affection were converted into the triumphs of vanity; if, where you hoped impassioned gratitude, you met with coldness; if, where you expected admiration, you experienced—"

"Contempt!" interrupted Arbella, not suffering her to conclude her sentence. Then rising and suddenly embracing her, "I owe you more than I can express," she said; "You have saved me from a folly to which I never could have looked back without confusion and repentance. The idea of contri-

buting to Spencer's happiness was what seduced me, and I was nearly lost by the deceitful flatteries of my own heart. But if he is really desirous of possessing it, he knows but too well the way to it. I would not for worlds, by anticipating him, incur the danger of his neglect—his mother's scorn. So now, having settled that matter, tell me how goes on all above? Blue-beard still angry, and the fair self-immured Fatima still sullen, hey? I always said it would go hard with her when she brought matters to a crisis, for he is as determined as she is flippant—Well, well, never mind, let them fight it out," she continued, shaking the wild roses in her bonnet as she tripped down stairs, "the one is equally prepared for defence, as the other can be for attack. If her Ladyship is possessed of porcupine-spirit, his Lordship has as much hedge-hog valour, and that will do just as well—Don't you think so?"

Not possessing the versatility of the lively Arbella, Matilda could not consider in the same light a disagreement in which it was necessary she should bear a part, and yet

in which it was most painful to her natural modesty to seem to interfere. The interest which she really began to take in the happiness of Lord Torrendale, alone served to render this situation more tolerable, by the hope it held out to her of being able to be useful to him. Early confirmed in a habit of reserve and mistrust, by the unfeeling advantage which his lady had taken of the influence her beauty gave her, to hold up to ridicule the less obtrusive character of her lord, he had retired into himself for his resources and consolation, and was often mistaken by others, as being dull and inattentive, when nothing that passed had escaped his penetration and remark. Though devoid of that amiable charm of conversation, that *fleur d'esprit* which can give pleasure to others, his abilities were respectable, and his virtues solid.

Meanwhile, the gaiety of the mansion drooped with her who had promoted it. Those twin-cygnets Sappho and Alcæus, "Slept with i s 'n darkness furled;" and forgot their mutual enmity, in regret for the

interruption of their mutual amusement. Arbella alone served to keep up the life and spirit of the party; for she found at Woodlands, such an attraction in Matilda's society, that however unwelcome to the master of the mansion as "a Stockwell," she could not refrain from at least one daily visit. Absorbed in the duties that friendship required of her, Matilda seldom saw Strathallan; and when she did, they conversed on different topics, with no attempt to renew that interchange of mind, that blameless yet tender intercourse of the heart, which had made her, in their conversations formerly, consume so many hours in innocent luxury. He seemed to retain no resentment for the past; but chilled and repelled by coldness unexpected and unexplained, he avoided exposing himself to the risk of a similar repulse. At least Matilda guessed these to be his feelings; and mourned the obligations imposed by a rigid delicacy, not by a word or look, to do away the impression one painful moment had produced. Sometimes she thought that the unpleasant circumstances which had recently taken place, filled the mind of Strathallan, and caused the

alteration of his manner ; at all events she felt the change, and felt it the more, because conscious she had no right to complain.

Lady Torrendale had now been some days confined to her chamber, and began to feel extremely weary of her self-imposed penance. Matilda seized this auspicious moment of returning reason. This amiable girl had a penetration and insight into the disposition of others, which, as it was the result of intuition, not of experience, so far from injuring the bloom, only added a grace that was *piquante* to the interesting delicacy of her character. 'Twas this, that enabled her, with all those little wiles that are so blameless and so winning, when employed in a worthy cause, to adapt her arguments to the weak mind to which they were addressed ; and to know the juncture at which to apply them with the greatest probability of success. However wearied with her lofty station, how to descend with dignity, was literally and figuratively, the great difficulty with Lady Torrendale. She had positively declared she would never enter a room which her Lord inhabited,

nor speak to him again, unless he testified by a proper submission, his desire that she should do so—and how recede with honor from so solemn a declaration?

At length Matilda ventured to hint, that communication by letter might be productive of some change without compromising the dignity of the writer; and suggested a few topics of the mildest and most conciliatory nature, of which she thought her noble friend might advantageously avail herself. Lady Torrendale listened, or rather seemed *not* to listen, with her usual languid toss of the head; but the next day, she took an opportunity to tell her, that she had been thinking it would be no unbecoming concession on her part, to address a few lines to her Lord, if it were only to justify her own conduct, and disclaim any intention on her part, of bringing affairs to the present violent issue; and the Countess accordingly presented her with a paper all fragrant with musk and rose-wood, in which Matilda found all her own arguments made very honorable use of. She felt delighted that her Ladyship should have the

entire credit of them, so they were found useful in forwarding the reconciliation she so much desired. Miss Melbourne undertook to deliver the letter to Lord Torrendale, who had felt miserable since the interruption of his usual domestic habits, and only wanted a decent pretext to give up his resentment ; but Miss Ferrars, whose imprudent vivacity it was impossible to restrain, had nearly ruined every thing, by snatching the precious billet from Matilda, whom she met upon the stairs, and declaring she would present it herself, with—"To your pomposity, these are humbly sent by your afflicted wife, &c."

Matilda with difficulty got the manuscript out of her hands, and seized a favorable moment of solitude and *ennui*, to offer it to his Lordship. It was not difficult to bring Lord Torrendale to terms. He had from the first rather wished to alarm than to punish Spencer; and he now readily came to a composition in which it was agreed, that his Lordship should, without dissolving of the long-contested estate of Strath Allan satisfy all the present demands upon his younger son out of his own

private fortune; on condition that that son should give him his word of honor not to contract any more debts without his knowledge, and that he should immediately join his regiment, which was now returned and quartered in the North. That Lady Torrendale should be given all due credit for not having involved herself on her own account, in the embarrassments that had proved so distressing to the family, and for being guilty of nothing farther than ——— encouraging Fitzroy in every folly. A separate article which there was great reason to suppose was not read by Lord Torrendale, left the ports open to Mrs. Stockwell, at Woodlands, and Fitzroy Square. Some, recollecting his Lordship's sagacity, which was equalled by his hatred of this lady, declare he could not have overlooked a clause that so materially concerned his future tranquillity; and scruple not to whisper, that there were two copies made of the treaty, in the second of which alone, this secret article was surreptitiously inserted. Her Ladyship, perhaps, had a secret whispering that she should still have

occasion for the visits of her old friend; or perhaps she did not wish the history of her former obligations to go farther. Be that as it may, Mrs. Stockwell was obliged to be both more sparing and more circumspect in her ensuing visits to the mansion. Every thing was now arranged to the satisfaction of the countess, except the approaching departure of Spencer; which was to take place the ensuing week. She, however, statesman-like, comforted herself with the idea that even that small portion of time was something gained; and during that interval, a circumstance occurred, as if contrived to her wish, which suggested to her ladyship's fertile brain, the hope of fixing him near her, by a brilliant and permanent establishment. Matilda meanwhile tasted the delight of a disinterested and ingenuous spirit, in seeing domestic happiness and tranquillity restored by her exertions; while in the eyes of an indifferent observer, she acted on this occasion the only part her youth and character made becoming; that of an unmeddling, though not unfeeling, spectator.

CHAP. XXII.

Ecco dirò quel fonte
Dove avvampò di s'degno
Ma poi, di pace in pegno
La bella man mi dié.

METASTASIO.

WHEN no longer called upon to interest herself in the concerns and distresses of others, Matilda looked around, and could not conceal from herself, that the prospect offered nothing but misery to her heart. In her former vexations she had accustomed herself to look to Strathallan as her consoler. How doubly painful, then, was an affliction, of which Strathallan was the source and cause. As for him, he was not so completely unhappy, as his conduct might have led her to believe. However hurt, at the the first moment, at the only instance of want of confidence she had

ever shewn him, it was difficult for the penetration of a lover long to confound resentment with contempt; it was impossible for him not soon to perceive, Matilda could not have thus treated one who was indifferent to her, and the altered conduct which had begun in pique, was continued from a persuasion of its being the only course he ought to pursue—A lover! must he own himself one? a feeling of self-reproach, unusual as severe, mingled with the unwelcome conviction. Valuing himself upon that high-souled delicacy of honor, that forbade alike in every relation of life, whatever bore the least appearance of duplicity, he found he had been led by a concurrence of unforeseen circumstances into a situation, in which it might, perhaps, with apparent justice be imputed to him. Yet was it so singular, that two hearts, which, from opposite causes, the world could not make happy; his, because he had proved its deceitful flatteries too early and too long; her's, because secluded from its influence in opening youth, she shrunk dispirited and dismayed from the rigid caution, and heartless

observances it required, should, as by a natural sympathy, find their repose and level in each other?

The discovery of the sensibility of Matilda, a discovery which his peculiar tone of character, a native diffidence and elegance of feeling, not incompatible with a high consciousness of worth, made him slow and reluctant to admit, filled him with that shame and regret which a generous mind feels, at the acknowledgement of even an involuntary error. He judged of her sufferings by his own; and knowing himself capable of an enthusiasm of passion, which the extreme mildness of his manners, perhaps, only concealed, to concentrate with force more intense; he could not forgive himself for introducing a guest so painful, into a bosom, late the mansion of purity, innocence, and peace.

These were not, however, his constant reflections: the heroism of the moment often yielded to the natural and involuntary pleasure that arises, even under the most opposing circumstances, from the consciousness of being beloved. As for his gentle mistress,

now Woodlands was become, for so many reasons, unpleasant to her, her only recreation was a ramble with Arbella to the beloved Fountain of the Rocks, their most favourite walk ; where, at a distance from the scene of her disquiet, she could just get a glimpse of the sylvan wildness, and picturesque grandeur of those natural barriers that surrounded her once happy home ; and, while her eye watched the tops of the tall trees that guarded its approach, recall the hours of peace and innocence she had spent within its bosom. Such a situation was, for both parties, a state too forced and violent to last ; and while Miss Melbourne and Strathallan would both have given worlds to taste, for one hour, that tranquillity with which Miss Mountain, though so intimately concerned in them, seemed to view the agitations and commotions around her, accident revealed their mutual feelings to each other, in a manner which Matilda had long reason to doubt, whether she most regretted or rejoiced at.

Taking the arm of Arbella, who gave her

friend her sympathy, without enjoying her confidence, she had proceeded on her usual melancholy stroll to the Fountain of the Rocks. — Arrived there, Arbella, to whose activity it ever appeared but a trifling walk, amused herself, with the gaiety of a careless, if not a happy heart, in seeking wild plants for her friend, among the recesses of the rocks beyond them, bounding with aërial lightness from cliff to cliff, or displaying her agility by her rapid yet safe descent, down the narrow and precipitous paths into the road below. Matilda, on the contrary, whom dejection now always inclined to lassitude, found herself already in need of repose, and seating herself on a little stone bench within the cavern of the rock, indulged in the luxury of melancholy which that scene, with its attendant circumstances, was, always sure to inspire. “Happy Arbella!” she sighed, “why am I not like you, possessed of that gaiety which rises elastic from the pressure of disappointment or misfortune. Yet no—I would not, for your enlivening gaiety, exchange the thoughts that sometimes steal in to gild my

hour of grief. And am I then so lost! Is wretchedness, connected with his idea, preferred by me to happiness without him? Why am I not as I was but a few short months ago, when gay and innocent as the bird of spring, every flower that expanded, every breeze that blew, could swell my heart with grateful pleasure? What right had you to disturb happiness so blameless and so perfect?"

Then, fixing her eyes upon that fountain which was connected with a thousand different recollections, "Twice-lost Strathallan!" she exclaimed, "was it pity caused me once to shed those tears for you; was it not presentiment of the misery you were still reserved to inflict upon me. How much less bitter were they, than those that now will fall. Yes, soft, gracious, relieving to the heart, they proved their worthier source; while these, the offspring of a more selfish feeling, avenge with their corrosive bitterness the weakness that encourages them to flow. I will return to my native rocks; with the employments, I shall perhaps resume the

serenity, of my former life. I will quit this fatal scene; I will quit that dangerous abode, where every object reminds me—breathes of love; surely there is some magic in this place.” She rose as she spoke; but felt as if still rooted to the spot, on perceiving two persons approaching it whom she soon discovered to be Lady Emily and Lord Strathallan. The brother and sister appeared fondly engaged in interesting conversation. Lady Emily was relating to him something to which he listened with evident pleasure. As she drew nearer Matilda, “This is the place,” she thoughtlessly exclaimed, “this is the very spot where Miss Melbourne so lamented for you Strathallan, when we all thought you lost to us.”

“Lady Emily,” interrupted Matilda, colouring, “you surely do not think of what you say.”

“You know you did,” continued the young Lady; “are you going to impeach the veracity of Miss Mountain? And you may recollect, when she told us of it, were marked that all the feeling she should have shewn, was expressed by you.”

“ When you remember, that I had not even seen Lord Strathallan at that time,” said Matilda gravely, “ you will feel conscious, Emily, how little ground there must be for this discourse, which, however amusing to you, I must beg, on my account, may not be continued.”

“ Don’t mind her,” said the little girl, again addressing herself to her brother, “ she knows what I say is true—and she knows I could tell more, and that often since that time—”

“ I shall believe nothing but what Miss Melbourne allows,” interrupted Strathallan, and, thrown off his guard by the delightful communications to which he had been listening, he added, as he approached her, in a hurried whisper. “ Dearest, loveliest creature, is this slight confirmation too much to demand, in return for all that for this last week I have suffered?” She turned from him to hide her emotion. He mistook the action for indifference. “ Oh Matilda,” he resumed, with that accent of plaintive tenderness which always penetrated to her heart, “ will you make me regret my return?” In these

words he had involuntarily resumed that tone which she had not heard him use for many days. It spoke the more dangerously to her feelings, and conscious of the necessity of firmness, she replied with affected calmness: "Impossible. You have every thing that attaches us to life. Friends, father, an expectant bride," she had nearly added, and this indiscretion of a heart too little accustomed to the blandishments of love, would have too surely revealed the nature of its emotions to Strathallan—but it was lost by the impetuous vehemence with which he interrupted her, exclaiming:

"Heavens! how a few days have altered you—to what am I to ascribe this change?"

"To what you please," replied Matilda, who, trembling at the greatness of the error from which she had just escaped, thought it necessary to call in the aid of all her self-command in her answer.

Strathallan walked a few steps from her in silence. "Come, come," cried Lady Emily, who began to be frightened at what she had done. "You know you used to call your-

selves brother and sister. Brothers and sisters should not quarrel. Strathallan, Miss Melbourne, give me each a hand. You must, you shall be reconciled."

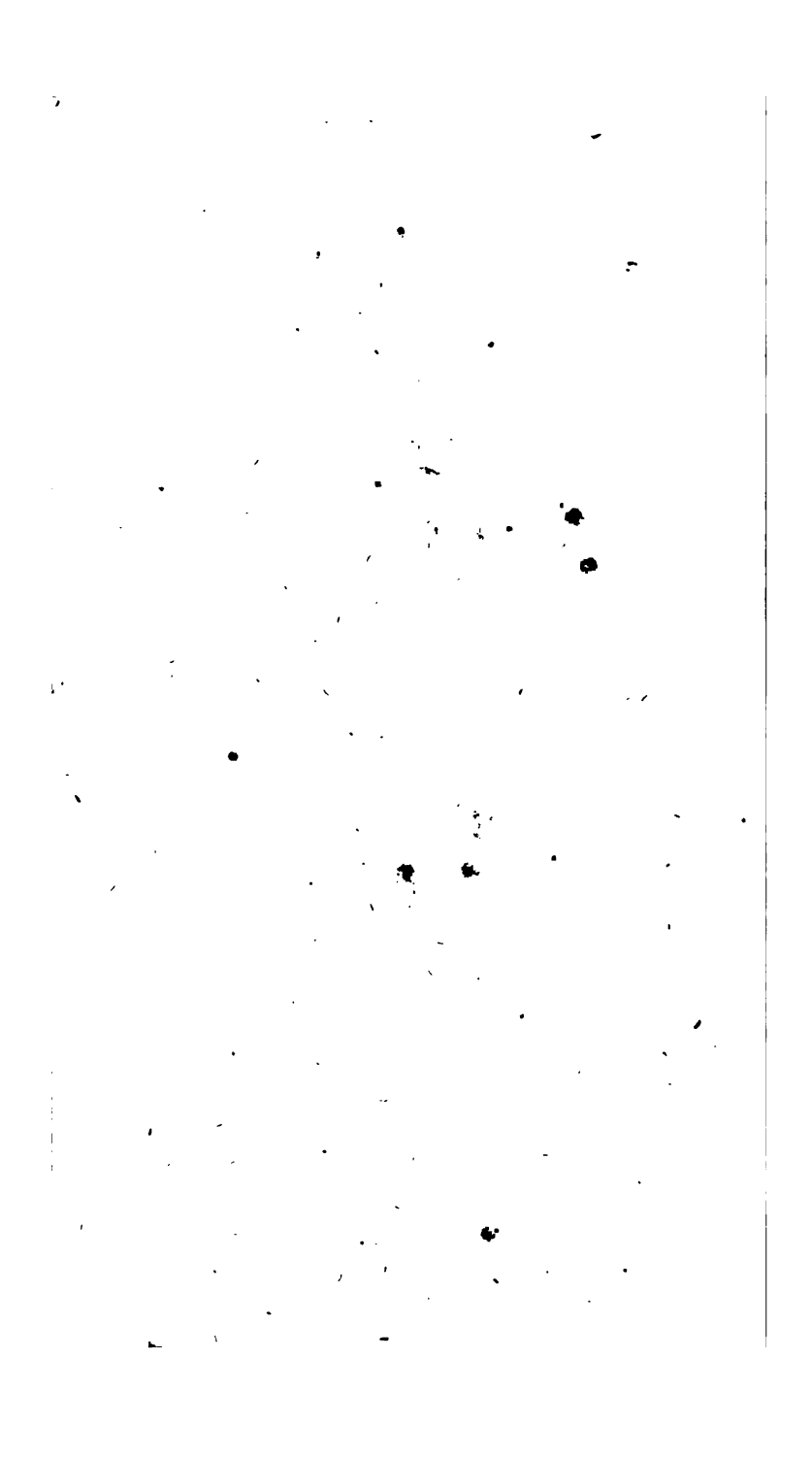
He could not long retain displeasure where he depended so much for happiness. He advanced towards her. The momentary resentment his eyes had expressed, only rendered their returning tenderness more irresistible, as they were now bent upon her face, beaming once more with looks of love. To Matilda's young heart their silent language was all-powerful. It yielded after this short estrangement, with added pleasure to the charms of reconciliation. He advanced—Lady Emily took Matilda's reluctant hand, and it had fallen into Strathallan's before she recollected that hand was plighted to another.

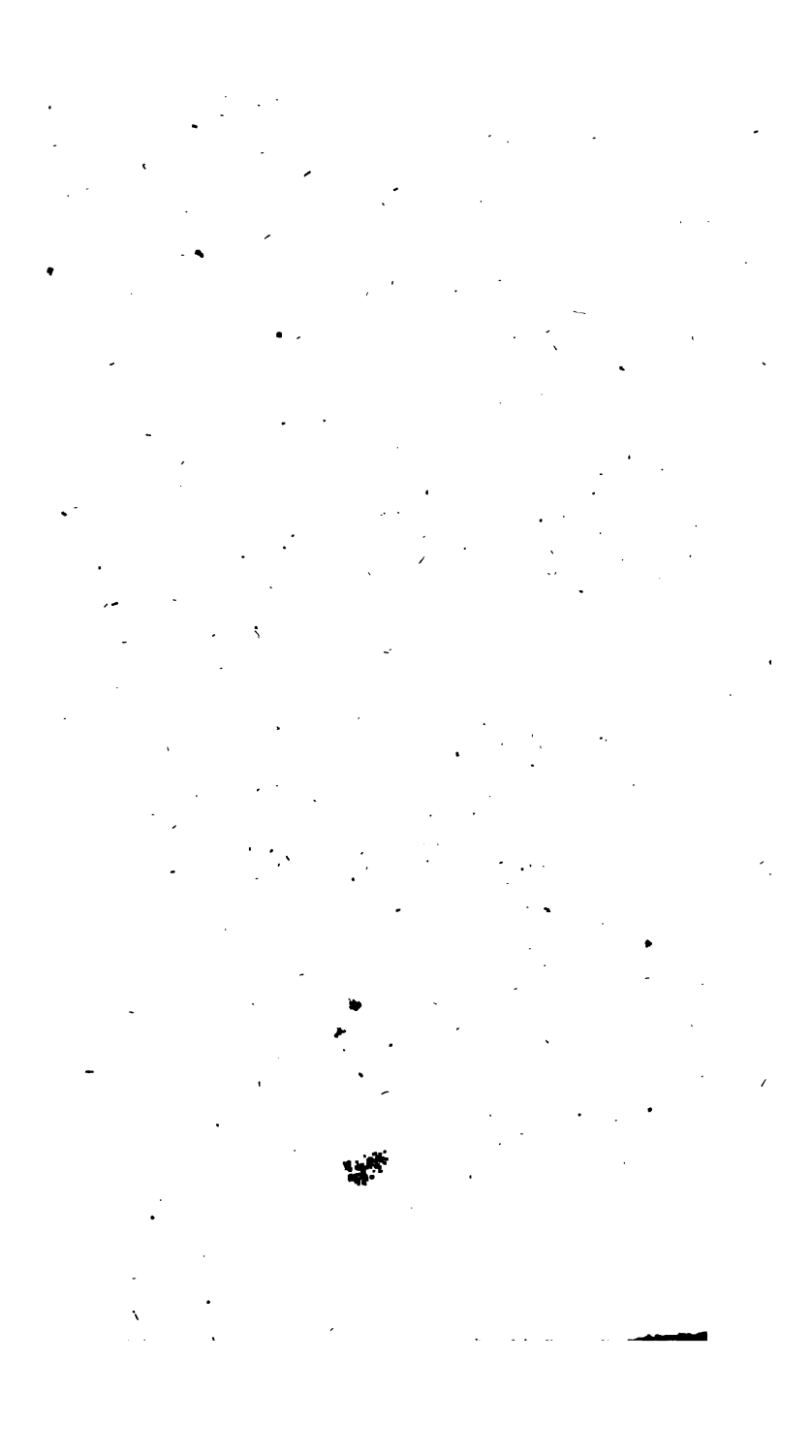
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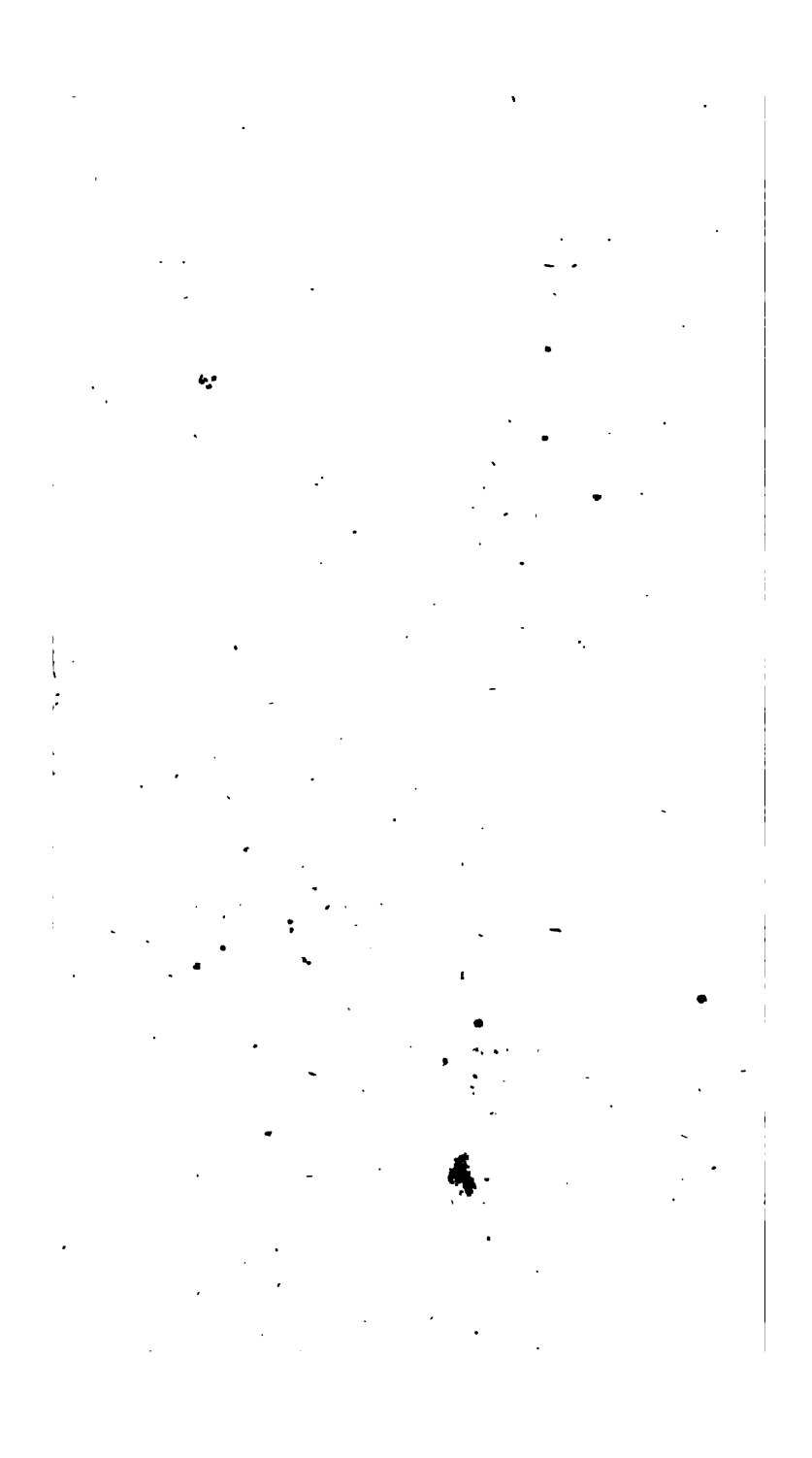


Printed by R. & R. Gilbert, St. John's Square, London.









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